Chapter One

Signs & Elements

Why Signs Act the Way They Do

Before analyzing each of the twelve signs, it's good to first explore two prime features that contribute much to understanding each sign's characteristics: its **element** (fire, earth, air, or water) and its **mode** (cardinal, fixed, or mutable). The blend of these two factors helps explain why a sign behaves the way it does, why it's motivated to respond to life in a manner unlike any other sign, and how it goes about getting its needs met. Note that no two signs share the exact same element-mode mix:

Sign	Image	Symbol	Element	Mode
Aries	The Ram	♈	Fire	Cardinal
Taurus	The Bull	♉	Earth	Fixed
Gemini	The Twins	♊	Air	Mutable
Cancer	The Crab	♋	Water	Cardinal
Leo	The Lion	♌	Fire	Fixed
Virgo	The Virgin	♍	Earth	Mutable
Libra	The Scales	♎	Air	Cardinal
Scorpio	The Scorpion	♏	Water	Fixed
Sagittarius	The Archer	♐	Fire	Mutable
Capricorn	The Goat	♑	Earth	Cardinal
Aquarius	The Water Bearer	♒	Air	Fixed
Pisces	The Fishes	♓	Water	Mutable

Repetitive patterns can be found in these two primary sign classifications. In the element column, note that the zodiac begins with a sign of the fire element, followed by earth, and then air, until the cycle ends with a sign whose element is water. This element pattern then repeats two more times. In the mode column, cardinal energy begins the cycle, followed by fixed energy, and ending with mutable energy—a pattern that then repeats three more times. Let's explore what all these groupings mean regarding the psychology of the signs, starting with a look at the four elements.

The Elements

Fire, Earth, Air, and Water

Before analyzing the basic features of all twelve signs, knowing each sign's element will tell us much about how that particular sign interprets its surroundings—what is its natural orientation toward life in general? What is the lens it uses to assess reality? Each element represents a basic quality of consciousness that contributes to our personal awareness—it acts like a psychological sense organ. It describes how we are apt to perceive both our inner world and outer environment. Elements are the four filters we use to interpret what's happening to us. They describe how we naturally perceive the people and things around us, as well as how we understand our internal drives and urges. Ideally, we need to partake of the insights afforded by each astrological element, even if only certain ones actually dominate our basic, day-to-day temperament.

The four elements of astrology all have equal value and are interdependent, although in a manner not always obvious at first. They also unfold in a meaningful sequence. There is an intelligent reason why—from Aries to Pisces, all around the zodiac—fire always starts each cycle and water always completes it.

The twelve signs are thus divided into these four categories. Each element is associated with three zodiac signs. The **fire signs** are **Aries, Leo,** and **Sagittarius**. This immediately tells us that these three share

something in common that the remaining nine signs do not. The **earth signs** are **Taurus, Virgo,** and **Capricorn**. The **air signs** are **Gemini, Libra,** and **Aquarius**, and the **water signs** are **Cancer, Scorpio,** and **Pisces.** It is vital that students of astrology learn these four main groupings as soon as possible, which is why I am presenting them so early on in this book.

Although we could attempt to memorize a handful of traits ("keywords") belonging to, say, Aries or Scorpio, it is more helpful to first know a sign by its elemental properties. Many standard traits possessed by each sign are very much the result of its elemental makeup, especially at its core level. They reflect a sign's innate qualities, although such features can be molded, even distorted, by the constant pressures of social programming. It's impossible to find any of us doing a pure expression of any element, untainted by unconscious collective attitudes and assumptions that we've likely adopted.

Let's explore these elements in detail, starting first with fire.

The Fire Element

Flame Ride

Although all elements represent qualities that are equally valuable to our inner growth, the element of fire symbolizes a particularly dominant cultural force throughout the world. Fire is associated with "doing" rather than with "thinking" or "reflecting." It's an action-oriented element that freely moves out into life to dynamically seize the moment—think of flames energetically shooting upward and outward. Fire's "burning" urge is to experience life adventurously and with full gusto. Although not particularly organized, logical, or even considerate of others, fire motivates us to take quick, decisive action in the here and now—to strike boldly while the iron is hot and our passions are running high.

Until relatively recently, the archetypal world of fire has been the exclusive domain of traditional male behavior, reinforced by centuries of unquestioned and unbroken social conditioning. Society permits men to "do" their fire without much penalty—"boys will be boys"—that is, at least until males overdo their fiery expression and become destructively "macho."

Fire is a fighting element, ready to attack whatever tries to thwart its energy or get in its way. Applied on a mass level, this becomes warfare—a collective drama where men, historically, have released fire's potential fury by engaging in large-scale violence. Many men of today also vent their fire by being active in sports, by sexual conquest, by hunting, or by plunging into exciting forms of physical risk—daredevils are born of the fire element. Abhorring timid, wishy-washy behavior, fire is no coward when it comes to finding ways to satisfy its urges.

Women today are also learning firsthand—and perhaps cautiously—that it is psychologically and physically beneficial to own and openly express what fire represents: our *human* ability to move bravely out into the world according to the spontaneous impulses of our desire and self-will. More and more females are joining the ranks in such fields as boxing, football, soccer, weightlifting, and so on—formerly all male-dominated activities. More women are also running big businesses in the corporate world, and are taking on high political office—all due to their readiness and willingness to embrace the strengths of fire, and thus break gender-based stereotypes.

Newborn babies come into this world already displaying their raw, untempered fire drives—they'll cry a decidedly impatient and angry cry as their immediate way of asserting their being, as if claiming, "I am alive and I am here. Deal with my needs now!" Here is a purer, uncultured fire at work, accenting its customary focus on fulfilling "me" concerns. Although not exclusively associated with fire symbolism—despite the fact that astrologers relate it primarily to the Sun—the ego knows how to burn this element's volatile fuel when needing to draw attention to itself. Fire pumps up the ego's sense of commanding power. Thus, expect fire to be very self-focused and concerned with fulfilling its own desires, first and foremost. The signs Aries and Leo have very much been accused of this, but less so Sagittarius (and we'll analyze why later).

Strongly fire-oriented people can spend an entire lifetime acting as if their personal needs require urgent attention—they are not to be postponed or denied. Instant gratification is what fire wants and expects. However, in the process of exuberantly expressing who they are, fire types can deplete the energy of others. They can indulge in too much of a good thing, and in an uncontained manner. We tend to assume that fire people give of themselves in abundance—they warmly and generously radiate their light and heat—but they also need fresh energy sources to refuel themselves. It's exhausting to be around people who colorfully flare out all the time, who happily expend themselves, but then consume some of your vitality just to keep their own blaze going. Fire is thus a very demanding, even draining, force to be around for long periods of time. It can wear out other less-energetic elements—most so earth and water, who prefer cooler temperatures, anyway.

Still, it's no wonder that this headstrong, self-assured element has long been associated with natural leadership ability and royal command (especially Leo's proud and dignified, if not bossy, display of fire). Fearlessly moving ahead into the challenging world, to take

chances left and right, while leaning on no one for supervision and support, fire will stand tall on its own. Yet again, once it has used up a temporary source of energy, leaving only ashes, fire needs a fresh supply to keep going. Fire can be a very hungry element, due to its huge appetite for living. "Give me more of what keeps me vibrant and active," roars fire.

So far, we get a sense that this element can come on strong and will fight to survive. It is willing to do battle to ensure that it will continue to thrive. Our capacity to thrust ourselves bravely out into life, and thereby develop a momentum for vigorous expression, belongs mainly to the fire element. Aries is a dynamic example of this. It's also a *cardinal* sign—as we shall later explore—and thus has an advantage when it comes to initiating energized action in the world. Because it's such a natural self-starter, fiery Aries proves a smart choice as *the* sign to begin the zodiac (our cosmic "Twelve Step" program for living a better, fuller life).

Although fire can foster selfishness, it's this element's somewhat innocent self-absorption that allows it to retain its streak of independence, which then reinforces its instinct to follow a self-chosen path. Pioneers and trailblazers thus honor the fire principle within them when they show guts by going off in new and even controversial directions. They don't need permission to go where they wish to in life, nor is gaining the approval of others what determines whether fire types single-handedly embark on a chosen course of action. (Sure, they'd enjoy having such support, but ultimately they don't need it to initiate a major undertaking of personal interest.) "I'm here to please myself, first and foremost," fire honestly admits.

There is a bit of a "loner" streak in fire. This is not an element that easily attaches itself to others for long periods of time. Fire doesn't comfortably settle into structured relationships, and even the security of enduring intimacy is not what it wants—especially if that means its freedom to spontaneously move about will be curtailed. (Trap fire in a tiny metal box, and eventually it's life-spark will extinguish.) Thus, in matters of close involvement, expect fire to have problems with total

commitment (although loyal Leo has more staying power in this area, as long as few restrictions are imposed; this is because Leo is also a *fixed* sign, a factor that will be explained later). Settled relationships also hint at a shared life of expected behavior and routine habits, something that fire fears will prove too tedious to bear. Where's all the excitement and pizzazz of living? That's what fire craves.

Since fire isn't all that deeply absorbed in others—it's not one to merge or share—it won't allow itself to get sucked into the complicated worlds of people in need (that's more water's dilemma). Fire doesn't even feel it has to blend with the other elements in order to enhance itself (which is not true). It's too self-centered to even realize the value of exploring other ways of perceiving the world—it's much too sold on its own way of sizing up reality. Still, our growth process involves a skillful and conscious integration of many astrological factors that initially appear to have little in common, or that typically clash when combined (the old "incompatibility" issue).

Some of us may be born with a heavy fire emphasis: besides Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius, there are also "fire" planets to contend with—the Sun, Mars, and Jupiter. Since there are other signs and planets in our chart associated with the three remaining elements, we need to better combine our fire energies with these other components. This will help us develop a more well-rounded awareness of ourselves and of the world in which we live. We can't afford to take an exclusively fired-up approach to living, plus others would soon take issue with such a headstrong manner of behaving—we'd be accused of being arrogant, pushy, conceited, bossy, opinionated, or even too self-righteous.

So, when it comes to courageously living the life we were meant to live—unfazed by the attempts of others to censor us or "rain on our parade"—fire is the element that points us in the right direction. It believes in authentic self-expression and relishes displaying an upfront, spirited sense of self—and to heck with what the neighbors think! Fire has a hard time bowing down to the dictates of others. It won't blindly follow set rules of conduct, especially when they prove to be stifling. We need fire in our veins to give us the gumption required to take on

the world in a lusty, passionate manner. Dramatic fire makes sure that our life won't be dull and anemic. It's good to note where our fire signs are located in our chart, for here is where we will be supported by a more robust and honest approach to people and situations.

Now let's move on to the next element: earth.

The Earth Element

Terra Firma

The fire element appropriately begins the zodiac with energetic Aries because this element symbolizes the vital thrust behind the "will to be" that gives rise to all action. Life means movement, and fire stirs our basic need for motion. Think of fire as representing the essential, vital spark within every seed just waiting to explode into a rush of activity that initiates a plant's growth cycle (amazingly, seeds found in the tombs of ancient Egyptian mummies have been known to come alive and sprout—their inner life force, although dormant, survives for centuries of time without weakening). Thus, all sorts of beginnings and births in life are associated with fire. Freshness and newness belong to this element. Yet at some pivotal point, fire's expansive energy will need structure and organization to be useful. Such necessary containment comes from earth, an element that logically follows fire throughout the zodiac.

We live in a material realm that imposes all sorts of constraints, yet activity on Earth requires a slower pace so that we can better deal with most issues of physical reality. The heaviness of gravity abounds, and time is ever-present, but together they help us feel securely anchored to the solid, comforting world of form. Fire is more at home with a rapid, even agitated, alteration of conditions—it's a highly kinetic force—but to undergo too much of that could prove hectic and disorienting (not to mention physically debilitating). We instead need a more leisurely pace in order to function reliably, and thus earth makes sure that fire's dynamic energy is grounded and better conserved. Humankind long ago learned the value of preserving actual fire, rather than wasting it by letting it burn itself out. Astrological earth is urging us to do the same, especially on the psychological level.

Earth is admittedly less showy and vibrant than fire. It appears passive and inactive (a clump of dirt or a log of wood seems inert and dull compared to the high drama of a raging inferno). Nevertheless, earth provides a necessary stillness and an economy of movement that helps fire's energy endure longer and thereby extend its potential.

Earth doesn't like to use things up too quickly or to run out of needed supplies prematurely. Less refueling is required by this stable element because it conserves fire's life force in smart, effective ways. Actually, earth is not so much "smart" in its operations as it is blessed with common sense—an instinctual "know-how" that is not based on mere intellectual knowledge.

As a result, earth is very savvy when it comes to understanding the material world and figuring out what can and cannot be accomplished with available resources. Earth signs all share a respectful awareness of life's inherent limitations. Fire may balk at accepting that life issues restraining orders now and then, but earth makes peace with this obvious fact and learns to function well within such conditions. (By the way, all elements have their own take on "reality," but earth's version of what actually exists—something highly dependent on what our physical senses register—seems less open to debate or subjective interpretation; at least that's how earth sees it.) Earthy reality is tied to the tried-and-true rhythms of the physical world, with its predictable, natural cycles. Earth depends on repetitive, reliable phenomena. It's obvious that this element plays a key role in the scientific disciplines, where an earthy capacity for clear-headedness, painstaking testing, and sober observation are a must.

As humans, we are so unavoidably earthbound and attached to our physical impressions of life that it's no wonder this element is so darn sure about what it regards as real. After all, the tangible proof that earth needs to function is clearly found all around us—matter undeniably exists. Earth signs steadily focus on this most evident level of experience, yet they run the risk of assuming that this tangible realm of ours is what counts the most and what truly makes up our prime reality—the only one on which we should fully depend. All else has less worth in the long run. Well, we can quickly see how this attitude may lead to narrow, materialistic assumptions concerning life's potential. Things in the outer world potentially hold more attraction to earthy types than do internal, psycho-spiritual realms of being. Earth is skeptical of anything as abstract as a soul or a psyche.

If close-mindedness and inflexibility can be avoided, then earth becomes a wonderful element blessed with the power to manifest the deeper potential of the other elements. Earth helps less tangible energies incarnate and enclose themselves in matter suitable for their purposes—earth gives spirit needed shape. We all have the signs Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn located somewhere in our chart, indicating areas where we can express our needs and demonstrate our abilities in worldly, concrete terms. Earth has a talent for building something solid and supportive for us, and it believes in working long and hard to achieve what it wants. Patience is its virtue, and time is its friend.

And yet, because it is astrology's less glamorous element—one not given to colorful display, emotional depth, or imaginative thinking—earth is typically treated with less fanfare. It evokes a "ho-hum" response. (No one ever says, except sarcastically, "Wow, it must be *so* exciting to be born with *all* that earth in your chart!") Earth is more like a little brown sparrow, in contrast to fire's gloriously strutting peacock. Earth is as plain and functional as a "sensible" pair of shoes, compared to diamond-studded high heels. It's as comfy and familiar as an old sweater. Being highly praised as someone who's trustworthy, dependable, and humble—all earthy traits—seems less a compliment than being touted as dashing, witty, and effervescent.

Nonetheless, earth quietly makes sure that much of our ordinary world runs in a timely, organized fashion—it tries to keep things operating smoothly, day by day, and this typically involves setting up systems of efficiency. Should this conscientious element decide to pack it up and archetype itself elsewhere in the Universe, chaos on our planet would soon spread like wildfire, and we'd all be horrified at how messy life would quickly become, as everything broke down or became misplaced (nothing would stay put). Earth signs thus do what they can to keep such chaos at bay, mainly by devising and enforcing necessary rules and regulations that ensure order. Earth is the custodial element of life, dutifully straightening up the world whenever it gets out of control, while also carefully attending to all-important details, no matter how small, that help prevent future trouble from brewing.

But just so we don't pigeonhole earth as all work and no play, realize that the realm of bodily sensation also belongs to this element. Earth (especially Taurus) enjoys the creature comforts of being human. It believes that there's nothing wrong with feeling contentment in very physical ways. The body is not such a bad thing to own and satisfy. Earth wants us to proclaim, "Yeah, I'm part animal and proud of it!" Varying degrees of sensuality play a role in the life experiences fostered by this element. We shouldn't automatically think that means sex, since our earthy needs can also be met by taking a long, hot bath or even by having a professional massage—and let's not forget the satisfaction of eating a wonderfully cooked meal while in comfortable, visually pleasing surroundings.

Earth also realizes that physical well-being is very important in life, and thus this element will urge us to listen to our body's signals and know when to quit doing whatever could turn out to be abusive to our health. It's as simple as this: When tired, earth rests. When hungry, earth eats. When stressed out, earth . . . shops! (I'm only half-joking). Fire, in contrast, will keep going until it runs out of gas. It often can't even tell that it's exhausted until it collapses (and even then it expects to rally quickly). Wise earth respects its physical limits. In real life, however, people with a Virgo or Capricorn emphasis in their charts need to monitor their workaholic tendencies, since overwork and other taxing mundane pressures can drain a body's resources. I still contend that it's the fiery factors of our chart that make us never want to stay still and relax—fire always looks for more excitement, more action, more hustle and bustle.

Earth is an element that carefully plans its activities, but it needs sufficient time to do so. Nothing is to be rushed, since haste makes waste (earth is less forgiving of its "dumb" mistakes than fire and air are of theirs). Poorly organized folks depend on earthy types to get things finished, and done correctly. As a result, earth can take on more responsibilities than it should. It can carry heavy weight on its shoulders by over-obligating itself, which becomes burdensome. Remember, earth likes to have things running efficiently and will therefore see

all projects to their completion, no matter how demanding (it may complain a lot, but it gets the job done). Nothing is to be left in the air, dangling. All bothersome loose ends are to be wrapped up. Earth can therefore run a tight ship, especially when a deadline is fast approaching. It's no wonder that all the other elements tend to leave poor, dependable earth holding the bag—earth is a sucker for doing "the dirty work" that no other element wants to touch. Yet earth is quietly confident that it can handle the task and successfully end up with solid results.

A common problem with earth is its tendency to hold back emotions, to restrain feelings that sometimes need proper venting. This kind of self-control makes earth look composed and mild-mannered on the surface. This also gives this element the appearance of awesome strength and composure—no wonder the weak and the easily frazzled are drawn to "Rock of Gibraltar" earthy types. Still, more animated elements (fire and air) often want to give earth a good shake, and tell it to loosen up. They feel earth needs to show what it's really going through on the inside for a change, and to start reacting to life more dramatically.

Well, sorry, but earth doesn't get fired up quickly about anything. It would rather evaluate people and situations with a degree of level-headed calmness and from a safe position if possible ("You never know who or what's going to explode in your face," warns earth). Still, earth needs to work at learning not to repress its emotionality or even its anger, in favor of playing it safe throughout life by not making waves.

Now let's change the scenery and explore the world of the next element: air.

The Air Element

Cool Breeze

First, brazen fire urges us to go out there and *do* it, whatever it is. Don't think about it, don't analyze the pros and cons, just act! Get your motor running, jump on the opportunity, take the big plunge, and hit the ground running—*now*, not tomorrow!—and don't fret too much about the possible consequences of any bold actions taken. Next, it's security-conscious earth, wanting us to slow down the tempo, get settled, and start to consolidate what we've enterprisingly initiated for ourselves. Sustaining our earthy focus helps us fortify our efforts better, thus enabling our accomplishments to last longer (in contrast, fire's outcomes can have a "flash in the pan" quality—sparkling and energizing, but here today, gone tomorrow). Earth is looking for permanent results, even if this takes time and demands much stick-to-it-tiveness. The earth signs advise us to ground our actions more fully in the practical world by laying down solid foundations, and by attending to all pertinent details. We can then keep our steady system of operations running as reliably as a Swiss watch.

"Whoa," gasps air, "let's call a time-out to think about all this talk about full-time commitment." Sure enough, this next element seeks a bit of breathing space. Air doesn't want to become too immersed in earth's big building projects. Creating a little healthy distance helps air get an objective handle on things—some needed perspective—so that it can think more clearly about what has materialized thus far. Air is afraid that earth will want to stop fire's momentum for good and instead remain stuck in dull, even stagnating, routines. It's air's nature to circulate and to distribute its energy broadly—air is not comfortable with becoming too settled in matter. It's not interested in tightly compressing energy into something that ends up densely packaged and immovable, so air intuitively backs off from any condition that appears time-consuming or too slow to take shape.

Instead, the realm more natural to air is that above the ground. It's obvious that the higher up we go, reaching even cloud level, the more widely we can observe the terrain below. Details may seem less sharp,

but the greater our altitude, the grander the overview we can achieve. We can also feel an expansive sense of freedom. Thus, expect this element to be interested in comprehending life's bigger picture.

Air also likes to mix life's ingredients and then step back to witness the unpredictable results. This element enjoys observing how two or more things link up. It looks for apparent similarities between such factors as they combine, while noting obvious contrasts to be found as well. "If I join this with that, what will happen and why?" wonders air. This sounds like the dawning of scientific inquiry, or perhaps just human mischief in the making. Our capacity to undergo experimental, trial-and-error stages in life that hopefully enlighten us is something related to air, an element that's always eager to teach us something new.

Highly conscious and wide-awake, air is related to our ability to think and reason. It's the brainiest of all the elements, the one that loves to live life in its head and to create brilliant ideas to share with the world. Where would we be if we couldn't connect our words and thoughts in intelligent ways? We'd sound *un*intelligible, and that could lead to social isolation, something that all air signs dread.

Not a big fan of gibberish, air demands that language be clear and precise if real communication is truly our objective (air can set the standards here, I guess, because it even invented language). Yet that doesn't mean air can't have fun playing with words. It comes up with new, catchy phrases now and then; plus, lots of (hot) air produces chatterboxes at times. As air rules the wind, it's the element of windbags, talking up a storm.

Air is the one element of the cycle that keenly focuses on cause and effect: Bang head against wall, get dizzy, pass out. One condition not only influences another, but apparently can be the very cause or the catalyst of that other condition. That's basically what air notices, as it busily takes mental notes on how life appears to work—at least on the surface. Of course, it's on life's more observable surface where many superficialities are to be found, being the home turf of much that is shallow and trivial. Yet air gladly takes it all in, appreciating such things as momentary stimulations or fleeting distractions, if nothing else.

Fire can be passionately singular in its short-lived interests, while earth can be downright fixated on its long-range goals. But all air signs need a lot of variety and change; they wither from too much monotony or a life that lacks detours (or even a room without windows). Air doesn't enjoy feeling as driven as headstrong fire, nor is it as task-oriented as earth. Actually, air can adapt to these and other states of consciousness, as long as they are experienced in small doses for short periods of time. The bottom line, however, is that air is elusive and cannot be pinned down for long. It's not an easy element to grab onto and tightly control.

Highly curious air believes that life is a buffet table: Sample an assortment of whatever items look tasty, but don't pig out on any one thing and fill up too fast. Life is too short *not* to spread one's attention everywhere, and thereby mentally benefit from the open-mindedness such diversity encourages. Air types can be very cerebral in temperament. They sound smart and seem to know a lot; they even make up the bulk of life's "eternal students," forever feeding their minds knowledge. Along with such brainpower comes a cool detachment that can be invaluable when confronting life's more unsettling twists and turns. When others become hysterical during disruptive times of great chaos, those with air emphasized in their charts are apt to keep their wits about them and not abandon logic or clarity. However, this airy, cool-and-collected disposition doesn't work as well with life situations that require emotional depth and intimacy.

While it can appear to understand someone else's life predicament sympathetically, air does not empathize very easily (that's more a strength of the next element, water). There is a bit of aloofness to be found hidden beneath what otherwise seems to be an alert, inquisitive, likable nature that is eager to meet life straightforwardly. Air's cleverness at times can make it seem to be a bit of a trickster, playing loose with the facts, but by nature it's not a deliberately sneaky, deceitful element. Still, it has a hard time being real with itself and others in the realm of gut response. Air would sooner analyze feelings (preferably somebody else's) rather than simply "feel" their power at full potency. Even the previous two elements weren't equipped enough to prepare air for the powerful underground world of emotionality, since that's not their expertise, either.

Being emotionally disengaged with life is actually not a fault of air, since venting deep feelings isn't part of the job the Cosmos assigned this element to do—and we shouldn't blame one element for not behaving like another. Yet sometimes, due to air's strong ability to keenly mimic what it observes, this element can fake sentiments and emotions that seem convincing—at least for a while—but air does so more out of sheer curiosity as it attempts to figure out how others perceive reality. Air wants to understand where another element is coming from, perceptually. It's not afraid to confront experiences that it finds unfamiliar (in fact, it needs such stimulation). Air looks forward to learning more about life from fresh angles. It thus invites the environment to provide more and more information to excite the mind.

Air's capacity for intellectual breadth (especially in Aquarius) can result in innovative thinking, but it also has a talent for quickly scanning situations and spotting small movements and changes—a trait that can result in either sharp attentiveness or distractibility (the latter is most noted in Gemini). Air is also an excellent "people-watcher" element (here's where Libra excels). It's fascinated by human experience and even by the way people behave in diverse cultural settings. As the exchange of ideas is important to air (never an element to appear unsociable), finding ways to make human interactions smooth and hassle-free appeals to this element. More talking about issues and less fighting over them would be welcome, since air knows the value in "airing" those things out now that could otherwise cause trouble later. "So, can we talk about it first?" asks air.

The gift of analysis belongs to this element. Air helps us carefully consider life's multifaceted issues before finding suitable options to resolve them. Air comes up with bright solutions to life's nagging problems, but it realizes that seldom is there only one "right" way of looking at any situation. It also enjoys speculative approaches to life's puzzles, although this can border on abstract mind games that serve

no useful purpose; they're just a lot of intellectual gymnastics, sounding impressive but impractical. While fire and earth can think in more simplistic, black-or-white, or even right-or-wrong terms—air allows us to recognize the shades of gray in between. It evaluates the many sides of any situation before coming up with a final and fair judgment. Obviously, the introduction of air to the element cycle suddenly makes life more complicated. Now there are no easy answers to fall back on, no cut-and-dried conclusions, no "one size fits all."

Perhaps when exploring the far reaches of the observable Universe and when gathering astronomical data needing to be systematically decoded by cool, level-headed minds, air becomes a fine tool for the unbiased evaluation of certain factual realities. Here's where accuracy counts, and where subjective impressions can often lead to erroneous assumptions. Yet when using such precision-tuned, laser-sharp mental equipment to probe the psychological innards of a human being, air fails to do the trick. Some other approach to perceiving our "inner" reality is needed, especially since the world of our unconscious self is not bound by logic or reason, nor does it follow linear time. We're not robots, programmed to respond in predictable ways to exact stimuli, again and again. An unanticipated human quality arises, the result of deeply internal impressions of life. That's something all three elements thus far have not had to deal with—mood swings coming from who knows where.

Now it's time to plumb the more mysterious depths of human nature as we delve into the hidden dimensions of astrology's final element: water.

The Water Element

Deep Well

If the element cycle simply began with fire and ended with air, humanity could survive and thrive, yet we'd tend to be somewhat mechanical in our responses to one another—almost like members of an active ant or bee colony: organized, industrious, teeming with energy, but rather flat and soulless in our interactions. Should a member of our human "hive" perish, we'd feel nothing but the urge to efficiently dispose of the corpse and continue on with our endless tasks at hand. No tears would be shed since we'd feel no sense of real loss regarding our dead coworker (perhaps the air in us would be curious about what caused this death and if it could have been prevented, but that's about it).

Since the element cycle *does* conclude with water, it adds one very critical facet to our human experience: the development of our feeling nature and our ability to sensitively tune in to others. Water also helps us reflect on the subtleties of our inner life. Welcome to the world of emotions—from the raw to the sublime. This most receptive of elements symbolizes powerful, invisible currents that at times stir internal turmoil for us, but that also move us to act with selfless compassion for others. That's because water enables us to feel deeply connected to all living things at a soul level, and this helps dissolve our usual sense of being separate entities. If water sounds a bit mystical, it is! This is the only element that has a true feeling for inner states of Oneness and Unity. Water allows us to become a part of all that is, as we merge our consciousness with our environment.

Merging seamlessly with our surroundings, however, does have its problems. On one hand, this fluid ability gives water a chameleonlike quality. Water excels in the art of camouflage—it loses its distinct form while blending in with its habitat—something that has proven invaluable to the survival of the fittest from an evolutionary perspective. Water is absorbed by what it contacts and thus it loses its sense of self somewhat. The boundaries become blurred. On the other hand, this characteristic of water is exactly what makes it so empathetic, so

able to get under other people's skin and experience their internal realities. For example, fire may state, "I am me and nobody else!" Earth may claim, "This is mine and that is yours!" Air may realize, "I've got my own ideas, but what about you?" Each of these elements clearly retains an awareness of its own identity; a basic sense of self remains intact. Yet only water says, "I'm feeling exactly what you're going through, as if it's happening to me!" That's quite a radical shift of awareness.

In a sense, water invades its surrounding space without asking for permission to penetrate. Its instinct is to ignore all boundaries and instead to quietly seep into otherwise inaccessible places that are hidden from view. Yet feeling little need for protective barriers in relationships can prove problematic, especially when we become too absorbed by somebody who is filled with turbulent energy or is loaded with negativity. Water signs can get sucked in to this kind of dark scenario, but sometimes they become the troubled ones who pull others deeply into their vortex. A lack of boundaries can also imply poor self-preservation instincts. Water signs can be reluctant to fend off the dominating influences of others; they are not fighters by nature (except for Scorpio, who nonetheless can still feel conflicted when engaging in emotional battles). Water suffers from its passive tendency to take in other people's energies indiscriminately. It needs to learn to devise a better filtering system by borrowing a few natural defenses that the other elements use (such as fire's self-interest, earth's territorial streak, and air's emotional detachment).

One very important condition that water enables us to feel is love—not gushy romantic love, which is more a social invention, but love as a measure of caring and intimacy that reveals a deeper concern for the welfare of others. Water offers love as a uniting force to help dissolve all barriers that keep people at odds with or isolated from one another. With such love emerges many soul-refining traits, such as gentleness, kindliness, unselfishness, charity, and patience (especially the patience required to cope with the difficult temperaments of others). Water has the inner strength needed to endure external conflict,

although such conflict can be very jarring initially to this highly impressionable element. Water may appear weak and vulnerable during times of stress, yet its deep, uncanny understanding of human nature suggests it has the power to withstand much turmoil before collapsing or falling apart. However, such psychological endurance can seem self-punishing at times and even irrational.

Imagination is the realm belonging to the water element. Water has a direct pipeline to our unconscious, from which a vast and colorful assortment of wondrous images can emerge whenever we are in a proper state of receptivity (i.e., when we're sleeping and dreaming). Such energies aren't always pleasant, since the underground caverns of our psyche also harbor images that are terrifying or filled with darker desires that we usually manage to keep from consciously surfacing. Our angels and demons within reside in our unconscious, and the water element therefore symbolizes a wide range of emotional states—from bliss to hysteria. Having access to our mysterious but alluring inner dimension is a must for strong water types. The rewards to be had in the external world are not enough to provide true contentment. In fact, an almost divine discontent can plague water signs when life pressures them to neglect this private reality of the soul. Emotional disturbances can crop up as well.

Historically, just as men have been programmed to channel their fire energies into being manly, women have been identified—almost exclusively in the minds of men—as possessing the qualities of water, in large part because of this element's association with maternal urges and mood swings. Women, as mothers, were viewed as tender caregivers by nature, rather than by social dictate. They also have long been saddled with the task of maintaining domestic harmony and order, suggesting (to the men in their lives) that they inherently have a stronger need to be sheltered (due to their assumed nesting instincts) and protected, as the so-called "weaker" sex. While fire-identified men were to go out to eagerly fight life's battles and even literally bring home the bacon, their women were expected to keep the home fires burning and to have food ready on the table for when these strong,

brave warriors returned from their vigorous outdoor adventures. This fixed pattern of gender role-playing has gone on for thousands of years, and it has deprived both sexes of their greater human potential.

Thankfully, much of that is changing in today's transitional world regarding the sexes. The concept of men becoming "Mr. Moms" who work at home while doing housekeeping and raising kids—while their ambitious wives fearlessly climb the corporate ladder—is now a reality. Of course, it's still not something every man would consider doing (the routines of housekeeping alone are perceived as undesirably feminizing to many men). Yet modern men with a water emphasis in their charts feel a natural affinity for many realms traditionally deemed to comprise "a woman's world." They find that they are naturally domestic by temperament, and probably love the quiet joys of cooking and gardening. They also may believe that crying is a natural, healthy, human response and not just what "sissies" do when they can't cope with what life tosses their way.

Men who deny or reject their touchy-feely parts are also choking off a supply of vital, psychological fluid in ways that may later render them rigid and calcified as they age, with deadly health consequences to pay. Water keeps our soul moisturized and able to go with the flow instead of resisting the unfoldment of our real feelings with all our might. Water signs are adept at understanding people's needs, which gives them an advantage when it comes to perceiving another's hidden motivation. They are drawn to what is secretly going on below the surface of people's observable behavior. Thus, expect water to bless us with an instinctive urge to investigate the deeper mysteries of being human. Water's not afraid to go to the heart of such complexity, even though potential turbulence can be found as we descend into the underground of our unconscious.

As previously suggested, there's a logic behind the sequential order of the elements. Fire is followed by earth and earth by air, for good reason. Water not only rounds out our cycle of human experience, it also succeeds the air phase in order to ensure that our understanding of life doesn't neglect the emotional underpinnings of subjective, psychological reality. Having surface knowledge about ourselves and others is not enough to help us evolve. We must dig deeper in order to contact our soul. This is what water encourages, a journey within, where we get to uncover repressed or underdeveloped potentials whose released power can renew our total being. Water can be a soothingly restorative element, refreshing our spirit, especially if our approach to life has become too dry, sterile, or cynical.

It's time move on to chapter 2 to look at the three modes under which the signs operate. This adds yet another layer to our understanding of why each sign behaves in the manner it does.

Chapter Two

Signs & Modes

The Three Modes

Also called "qualities" in traditional astrology, the modes represent three ways in which astrologers categorize how energy flows. Each mode describes the characteristic manner in which such energy can be applied to all aspects of life. It depicts the style of action/reaction we adopt whenever we're dealing with people and situations we attract. Four signs of the zodiac are related to each mode, and astrologers often like to use the four seasons of the year as an analogous way to demonstrate the unfolding stages of these modes. This is appropriate, since the twelve signs are intimately connected to the seasonal cycle.[1]

It is important to note which of the three modes is dominant in our chart (especially if our Sun, Moon, and/or Ascendant are found in this mode). This will determine our most characteristic method of how we basically move out into life to achieve personal goals. Regarding our least emphasized mode (having little or no planetary emphasis), we often attract people whose charts are loaded with that quality; they show us the value of adapting to some of the ways in which that mode typically activates. This dynamic also applies to our birth chart's least emphasized element.

Let's look at each mode in detail to determine what kind of approach it takes and what can result from it.

The Cardinal Mode

Gotta Get Moving

The cardinal signs—**Aries, Cancer, Libra,** and **Capricorn**—all live life at a fast-paced tempo. Energetic involvement in the external world is highlighted. Cardinal energy supports taking direct action, with little hesitation or preplanning (although moody Cancer may mull things over at times when feeling emotionally insecure). Here the urge is to act swiftly, even assertively, whenever advantageous circumstances present themselves. Cardinal types won't stall or beat around the bush when something needs to be done *soon*, or when urgent, critical issues need to be squarely resolved.

This vigorous mode is psychologically built to respond to situational challenges involving quick decisions and sudden changes, those that underscore the benefits of being conscious in the "now" and of living in the moment. This is especially so for the sign Aries. In fact, fiery Aries and earthy Capricorn—the cardinal signs that seem most dynamically engaged in ambitious worldly activity—are ready to grab opportunities as they come. They both share the urge to mow down obstacles, and would hate to lose ground in life by not being ready to take decisive action. Thus, ready they are! These two signs are the more obvious go-getters of the cardinal group, the ones willing to face most issues head-on.

Cardinal energy can be confrontational, but cardinality doesn't necessarily demand a noisy clash of opposing forces—lively, open negotiation is an option. This mode is upfront and straightforward in its dealings, but it also expects fast results. However, frustrated cardinal types will stir up a little commotion, now and then, that results in a temporary crisis where something's got to give. Cardinal signs don't do well with prolonged deliberations, whereby dilemmas are drawn out. They seek a quicker release of tensions. They're also too impatient to cope with deadlocks or the foot-dragging tactics of others (even though airy Libra is good at stalling, usually when trying to buy a little time in order to come up with a better strategy for dealing with others).

Folks with a cardinal emphasis in their charts are very enterprising. They are self-starters who want to get something new going without being detoured by the interference of others. This is an "Outta my way, here I come!" mode that can show much initiative in getting personal plans off the ground. Of course, their natural sense of push can be interpreted more as pushiness. Cardinal types can appear a little too driven, and anxious to put things into motion. They do need to slow down before jumping into half-baked projects. Wired for action doesn't always mean being fully aware of the consequences that acting on impulse can sometimes bring about. Here again, it's Aries—the fiery aspect of cardinality—that has to watch out the most for not looking before leaping. However, even the remaining cardinal signs can get restless and antsy on those levels of awareness determined by their associated elements (watery Cancer can be emotionally impatient with people who won't openly commit themselves to a closely bonded relationship).

Even if cardinal signs are not all that productive and accomplished, they give the appearance of being in the thick of activity, of always being very busy and on the go. This is the mode known for hustling and bustling, where there are few quiet, still moments to enjoy before another phase of high activity begins. These signs seem vibrantly alive and driven to instigate situations in life rather than wait for things to happen naturally. They may at times jump the gun and act prematurely. Obviously, troublemakers who agitate others by being aggressive may have their share of cardinal signs, but so do the movers and shakers of the world who help society get a lot of vital social projects up and running.

Now it's time to blend the traits of the cardinal mode with the characteristics of each element to understand this group of signs better. In other words, cardinality comes in four flavors, which explains why its four signs may not seem alike on the surface. Here's a brief look at them:

Aries is a **cardinal fire** sign. There is a lot about cardinal energy that reinforces what fire symbolizes temperamentally. Indeed, all cardinal signs act like they've got their internal pilot lights on all the time

and are always warmed up for action. Aries has the added advantage of fire's natural spontaneity and its courage to take chances in life. Immediate action taken is typically backed by much self-will.

Aries won't weigh all sides of a situation and thereby waste time or risk becoming indecisive in the process. This sign instead sizes things up quickly and then jumps into action, for better or worse. It does not scatter its energy, but single-mindedly aims its undivided attention toward one challenge at a time. Cardinal fire symbolizes a highly driven, motivated nature—ever on the go—that wants to move forward to pioneer new territory. This is cardinality in its hottest, most overt expression, burning with an eagerness to be in charge of here-and-now operations, with an expectation of always coming out on top of things and ahead of the game.

Cancer is a **cardinal water** sign. Just because Aries and Cancer are members of the same club (two cardinal signs) doesn't mean they naturally see eye to eye or blend well together. The main problem getting in the way of smooth interaction involves temperament: Aries' element of fire sharply contrasts with Cancer's element of water. Water is too sensitive to withstand the often rough-and-tumble treatment Aries dishes out (the Ram's brusque ways, alone, jar the Crab's more delicate sensibilities). Aries is also much too impatient with the sometimes whiny, crybaby side of Cancer that readily shows its hurt feelings (the big pout) when neglected or rejected. Strong-as-steel Aries doesn't have much respect for any sign that tries to use its weaknesses and insecurities to solicit sympathy or pity.

However, cardinal water suggests that Cancer's powerful emotions are quick to rush to the surface to make an immediate impact on the environment. Cancer can be assertive and even agitated when expressing its feelings, as it is the most demonstrative of the water signs (ol' "rubber face") thanks to its cardinal nature. It can't easily hide what it's really going through on the inside, at least not for long, unlike more inscrutable Scorpio or Pisces. When it does feel safe and secure, Cancer can energize others to openly express their own emotions in healthy, tension-releasing ways.

Actually, it's cardinality that spurs Cancer to keep emotions activated and in play. Cardinal water may not feel comfortable being too still in this area. It always likes to know what someone is feeling—in other words, do whatever it takes to get other people to react. Of course, if not handled skillfully, this need for a mutual exposure of feelings in relationships can be a source of many emotional ups and downs for Cancer, because not everyone likes to be as revealing as the Crab wants them to be (plus Cancer expects to hear only what it can handle emotionally).

Libra is a **cardinal air** sign located halfway around the zodiac, and thus it's directly opposite Aries. Air is a sociable element, curious about human interaction, and here it combines with cardinality to make for an active interest in connecting directly with people—up close and personal. Libra comes alive around others and generates a lot of dynamic energy in all its one-on-one relationships. In many ways, Libra is just an Aries who has learned how to charm others into being cooperative and willing to help this air sign get things to turn out its way.

Aries, all on its own, will fight for what it wants. Libra instead persuades others to become its valued allies, ensuring that it'll have the backup support it needs to get its objectives met—but Libra will then turn around and give as good as it gets (showing much appreciation when treated well by another, yet becoming a ready opponent when handled unfairly; indeed, if unduly provoked, all cardinal signs feel the urge to attack others or defend themselves).

Libra is also assertive in initiating relationships due to its cardinal need to push forward and get something going. Actually, this is usually done in an agreeable manner that lets the other party know that Libra's quite interested in forming a close union. Cardinal signs usually like to give and receive unambiguous signals (the exception is watery Cancer, who can send out mixed messages when unsure about its feelings).

Capricorn is a **cardinal earth** sign. This mode-element combination may seem strange at first, since cardinality urges us to rush around and do a lot of things—at least to start them—while earth

wants us to stay in one place with our feet planted firmly on the ground. Earth urges us to plan our moves well and to use time and energy efficiently. Capricorn thus feels a strong drive to do big, important things in society, but it also works hard to make sure the results last a long time. This sign can be very assertive in the material world when it comes to gaining status. It's driven to manifest its goals in solid, enduring ways.

Of all the earth signs, Capricorn is the most willing to venture forth into unknown territory to take a few calculated risks, something Taurus and Virgo have trouble doing. The Goat won't take chances based on blind faith, but will move out into the world to try new things only after it has carefully evaluated the situation. Still, this is an earth sign with guts and gumption. Capricorn also has a strong instinct to climb (this is the sign of upward mobility regarding the ladder of success). It's an ambitious sign always looking out for more influential social positions to attain. It's also the only earth sign with the momentum to achieve prominence on a grand scale. The go-getter energy of cardinality is certainly behind the Goat's determination to "make it big" in the world.

Now let's take a brief look at the fixed mode and its associated signs.

The Fixed Mode

Sticking to the Plans

The fixed signs—**Taurus, Leo, Scorpio,** and **Aquarius**—don't enjoy the relatively fast and furious pace of cardinal signs on the move. They don't at all take kindly to pushy, aggressive people (cardinal types) or high-pressured situations (although Scorpio is well equipped to handle emergency predicaments). While not necessarily slow, these fixed signs take more methodical, organized approaches to life (perhaps less so with experimental Aquarius). They need to feel that they can control what happens to them, rather than be swept up in a flurry of exciting but short-lived activity. If anything, their main interest is to pull their energies inwardly to better fortify themselves from within. Being centered allows them to tap into their internal power resources. Fixed signs consolidate such inner forces in ways that enable them to concentrate and focus long and hard on their objectives. Their attention is not easily diverted by fleeting distractions. Their interests in life are purposeful and enduring.

Stability results when applying fixed energy. Such steadiness helps these signs persevere with a true sense of goal attainment; they're less in need of immediately obtaining what they desire—they can wait, unlike the "gotta have it now" cardinal group. (Actually, Leo can sometimes have a problem with waiting to be gratified, but nonetheless, it is learning how timing plays an important role in the fuller enjoyment of life.) Patience and the ability to clearly define what they want are keys to the fixed signs' eventual success. They're blessed with stamina and will persist in all personal endeavors. Of course, this can make them the most stubborn and fixated signs of the zodiac—the ones who won't take "no" for an answer. Sometimes they win in life only because they have worn down the opposition.

The desire nature is strong in these signs. The fixed-mode signs have appetites that are not easily denied or put on hold—and that includes even Aquarius' appetite for free social expression and its desire not to follow a conventional path. These signs may not put up a bloody fight when their needs are threatened, but they will—to the

nth degree—resist being dictated by others. They can't easily be forced to submit to outer authority. In short, they won't budge from any position they've taken until they're good and ready—and they typically are not "good and ready" until outside pressures back off and leave them alone to determine their own course of action. Interference from the sidelines is very unwelcome. Their motivation to change is always internal.

What's so great about the fixed mode is that its inherent staying power allows us to finish what we or others start. Cardinal energy may get the ball rolling in a high-energy manner, but fixed-mode energy quietly and steadfastly sees something to its completion. Fixed signs are the builders of life, desiring to further construct and give substance to what the cardinal signs have initiated. Thus, fixed signs are quite reliable (but again, watch out for Aquarius, who's not always great at handling the minor details of a big project, yet can often pull through ingeniously regarding those matters needing large-scale organization and smart social networking). Simply put, fixed signs are determined to get the job done. They cannot tolerate halfway measures and instead tend to give it all they've got, once motivated.

One pitfall of too much fixity, when mishandled, is its tendency to deal with life in uncompromising terms. Fixed signs can be quite unyielding, and this can lead to power struggles and no-win situations where all parties involved refuse to give in. The doggedness that fixity exhibits can cause trouble in situations where compromise and adaptability are needed most. Fixity is associated with stalemate conditions, where a battle of wills ensues. At times, this can be outright pigheadedness at work, attempting to thwart the easier solutions of others. Sometimes problems caused are simply due to being too habitual about adhering to one's daily rituals, especially at times when introducing a touch of variety would make so much more sense. (Actually, fixed signs of the earth and water variety—Taurus and Scorpio—have the most difficulty here).

Let's combine the characteristics of the fixed mode with the traits of each element to better comprehend why this group of signs behaves the way it does:

Taurus is a **fixed earth** sign. The zodiac's first earth sign is the most fixed, and thus most set in its ways of all twelve signs. No other sign is as entrenched in its attitudes as is this sign of the Bull. Yet this mode-element combo is quite steady and secure, and values stillness and serenity. Taurus is very anchored in the realm of the physical senses. It's grounded in the world of material form, from which it can attract and utilize valuable resources that sustain its life. Earth is an element that already seems "fixed," considering that, when left unaltered by other elements, it stays put and hardly alters its shape. Those with Taurus emphasized in their charts want a calm, settled life where few changes occur—especially those that happen without warning. This is one sign that can enjoy the unvarying patterns of routine without getting bored.

Fixed earth implies utmost dependability. Fixity likes to stay on a plotted course of action, without veering off into unknown directions; earth also appreciates any consistent, uninterrupted activity that plays it safe. Taurus can thus be counted on to deliver the goods in a timely fashion, but it doesn't take such commitments lightly. In fact, it's hard to associate anything "light" with fixed earth. Purposeful Taurus is heavy in disposition, but not oppressively serious. It's more sober than somber. A big problem with fixed earth is its tendency to become too one-track-minded and unwilling to change in midstream, even when it's plainly advantageous to do so. This mulish behavior often has strong fixed-earth types tackling things the slow, hard way. Such stubbornness is an example of the deep, internal resistance this sign feels, especially when it is being manipulated by external forces.

Leo is a **fixed fire** sign. It may seem odd to think of fire as being fixed, since flames naturally love to spontaneously leap here and there, especially on windy days. But the steady glow of logs in a fireplace, where fire's flames are at least contained, becomes a fitting fixed-fire image. Fireplaces add a warm, cozy, and even romantic quality to any room. The sign Leo can be like this, as well. Its warmth radiates from its heart, and it lives the life of the eternal romantic, with all the emotional drama that entails. Fixed fire implies steady enthusiasm and

long-lasting passions. Contained fire can burn more intensely and deeply (think of the fixed astronomical sun itself). Leo's fiery expression is less impulsive and more purposefully directed. It has well-defined goals to achieve and will harness all its creative power to ensure that it ends up a winner.

This is the most dependable of the fire signs, and one that is capable of great loyalty. Fixity helps Leo's fires burn steadily and longer than is typical of this element. Leo's flame is not easily extinguished once ignited. However, fixed signs can be obstinate, and fire can be willful. Leo thus has a reputation for being bossy and autocratic. It's full of pride and self-admiration, and this can lead to behavior that others find arrogant and snooty. Fixed fire means Leo's performance can come off as being inordinately self-confident (fixity feels strongly assured from within, while fire doesn't doubt the rightness of its actions). Still, Leo needs to feel utterly sold on itself in order to accomplish the great things it expects to in life. Since we all have Leo operating somewhere in our chart, it's good to know that here we have a sign that never wants us to feel like a loser.

Scorpio is a **fixed water** sign. Immediately, fixed water conjures up the image of ice. At times, Scorpio can be accused of transforming into an iceberg once it withdraws its emotional heat in its relationships. Yet its passions run deep, and thus this is a sign that is almost incapable of reacting to life in cold, aloof ways—although it may look like that, from time to time, when Scorpio is feeling deeply hurt. Since water represents the realm of emotions, fixed water suggests controlled feelings that seldom spill out and needlessly expose themselves. Scorpio's emotions are well contained—which perhaps makes them less messy—and yet, just how contained makes all the difference between unhealthy repression versus admirable emotional self-discipline.

Fixed water suggests a tendency to be very single-minded in its feelings. Such enduring interest creates an intensity that can lead to obsession. Of course, it's Scorpio's powerful instincts that compel it to probe and penetrate to the core of any matter with the dogged persistence of a bloodhound on the trail. Fixed water also means that Scorpio's feelings for others—whether loving or hateful—develop slowly and aren't easily dissuaded. There's little going on here that's superficial or fleeting. Scorpio can harbor strong feelings—even grudges—about somebody or something for a long, long time. Fixity helps stabilize water's emotionality, cutting down on mood swings and panicky reactions to outside threats. Indeed, Scorpio can appear amazingly composed in the face of impending danger. It does a marvelous job when handling crisis situations.

Aquarius is a **fixed air** sign. It appears there's always one sign of each mode that seems oddly misplaced (such as "shy" Cancer for the assertive, "in your face" cardinal signs). Aquarius is that oddball sign for the fixed group. All the other signs of this mode seem to want to hold on tightly to what they have, and can stubbornly use strong-arm tactics to get their way. Taurus, Leo, and Scorpio all can be very attached to their desires and thus too inflexible to change their ways overnight. However, Aquarius can suddenly revolutionize its behavior, given the right environmental conditions. (Besides, air signs aren't into attachments that much).

Fixed air seems like an oxymoron, since air's main interest is to circulate and spread itself far and wide, while fixity likes things to stay put. Actually, one image that comes to mind is an oxygen tank—air in a concentrated, contained form that's used to keep people from losing consciousness. Aquarius is very much interested in oxygenating society with progressive ideals that are aimed at vitalizing the social consciousness of many. Air in its fixed form suggests an intellect that is less easily distracted, resulting in stronger mental concentration. Air is filled with bright ideas that are often best applied to human situations, and here, fixity gives Aquarius the focus and patience needed to help such progressive ideas develop needed substance and durability.

Aquarius is therefore very "attached" to championing certain principles, based on Truth, that it can apply to life on a collective level—things like life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all individuals. Yet airy Aquarius doesn't want to become too grounded in mundane, earthy realities that seem to limit the mind's vast potential. It must

have enough intellectual freedom to breathe. Although it espouses democratic concepts with ease—especially where individual human rights are concerned—Aquarius can be a bit rigid and intolerant (fixed) in how its social reforms are to be implemented. There's a hidden dictator rattling around in its closet somewhere.

Next, we need to examine the mutable mode and its associated signs. But first:

Taking a Little Breather

I like to think of the action of the modes as a metaphor for our breathing cycle: The cardinal phase is like inhalation, where we sense an upward surge of rushing air, seemingly moving into our head—it keeps us from passing out and helps vitalize our body (being wide-awake and alert are cardinal-mode attributes).

Next comes the fixed phase, that stillness when we are momentarily not really breathing. Actually, holding our breath (fully possessing it) creates more of a static power than a gathering of energy. Hold it even longer and that power becomes more intense, with strong pressures building inside. This sounds like the inner strength of the fixed mode. (Interestingly, kids who are in a particularly stubborn mood have been known to hold their breath when defying their parents.)

At last comes exhalation, that mutable phase in which we finally release our breath and disperse its contents back out into the world. This is an act that completes the cycle of respiration, and what we are releasing at this point has been modified—it's not the same oxygen we first took in, but is now carbon dioxide. Thus, a transitional exchange has taken place—perfect symbolism for the mutable mode. Exhalation also makes room in our lungs for a new supply of air to invigorate us, allowing the cycle of respiration to repeat.

The Mutable Mode

Any Way the Wind Blows

The mutable signs—**Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius,** and **Pisces**—weaken the mighty resistances that fixed signs often put up to avoid being altered. Solid structure starts to lose its form as this process begins. Life is in a continuous state of change, even when there are periods where there's a lull in the action. Every season must come to an end. The mutable mode has the task of breaking down forces that have already peaked in expression, and that now need to be released and reformulated. The concentrated energies of the fixed mode have often become too crystallized—like a hardening of the arteries—to enhance the vital flow of the life force that was first animated by the cardinal signs. Mutability thus plays a necessary role in redistributing this energy, and preparing it for a future cycle of cardinal activity, just in time for the arrival of a brand-new season of promise.

As fixed-mode energy begins to wind down, small changes occur that signal a readiness for adaptation. Mutable signs become the agents of consciousness that allow for this needed adjustment. They are highly alert regarding where and when such alterations are required. Mutability's greatest strength is its flexible openness to change. These pliable signs urge us to stay open and adaptable to the various ways life introduces us to new paths of self-knowledge. They also try to educate us about life's multifaceted nature. The mutable mode activates our mental curiosity, whereby we sometimes are left with more questions about life than ready answers.

Nothing is quite firm and absolute in the world of mutability, because everything appears to be in a transitory state, going from one necessary phase to another. It's hard to feel settled about anything. It's not even easy to have a clear direction in life, since nothing can be taken for granted. Life is full of twists and turns, making long-range planning tricky for strongly mutable types.

Mutable signs need much variety to appeal to their decidedly mental nature, although "mental" doesn't necessarily mean cerebral in a logic-minded sense. Sagittarius and Pisces are two signs that live easily

in their heads, yet they need grand ideas and visionary ideals that inspire their collective hopes and dreams. In many ways, their interests lie in envisioning unrealized potential and conceptualizing life's purpose in the broadest of terms. The other two mutable signs, Gemini and Virgo, are more turned on by facts and figures, and by all concrete matters that can be measured, tested, and confirmed as "real." They are less impressed by ungrounded, abstract thought (although Gemini is momentarily impressed by anything that sounds brilliant, however impractical). Still, all mutable signs are keenly observational—they want to better understand how life works and how its many pieces fit together.

This group is loaded with nervous energy that needs proper channeling. They can be easily distracted by everything around them, although earthy Virgo is self-disciplined enough to stay focused on details and not mentally wander (even though disorder in its surroundings quickly captures its attention). It's good for mutable signs not to be given too many options, since this leads to indecision or a wasteful scattering of mental energy—they can spread themselves too thin by trying to tackle too many things at once. At the same time, mutable signs cannot tolerate monotony (although the earth in Virgo can handle dull routines more easily than the rest). Variety is the spice of life for this mode.

With the pliability of the mutable mode comes a bonus: youthfulness. It seems such resiliency can keep us young at heart by putting a little spring in our step, a little bounce in our beat. Mutable signs certainly do not plod on, as if weighed down by gravity, but are light on their feet. They seem to skip along life's path and tiptoe around heavy predicaments (although watery Pisces has to watch out for its attraction to life-complicating, melodramatic scenarios). All fours signs help us appear chronologically younger than we are (they even have an aversion to aging). The mutable mode shows us that we can greatly benefit from keeping our mind flexible and eager to sample more and more from life, even if only in small but digestible bits.

Gemini is a **mutable air** sign. Air and mutability have much in common, making this sign the winner of the group when it comes to

expressing the most obvious mutable traits. Air already likes to move about in many directions, unhampered by time or structure. It doesn't like feeling stale, which can happen when it stays still for too long. Mutability gives air plenty of opportunities for ventilation. Gemini thus has mental equipment made for exploring a wide range of interests. It sees little reason to restrain its appetite for knowledge. Information, no matter what kind, is stimulating for Gemini, who can quickly scan the environment and pick up newsy facts here and there. There's little that doesn't interest Gemini, at least for the moment. The only problem is that the Twins can suffer from "info" overload, a case where its head is crammed with an assortment of data that may be too trivial in content to be truly mind-expanding.

Still, Gemini will give anything that moves its short-lived attention—and does it ever enjoy seeing life in motion! There is a breezy side to Gemini that keeps it from getting hung up about anything that's too heavy in life, although it seeks to attain a general knowledge about such matters. Mutable air wants to cover a lot of intellectual territory. In order to quickly get the gist of something, it'll skim the surface before moving on to something new. All in all, Gemini is blessed with a versatile intellectual capacity for studying a variety of interesting subjects.

Virgo is a **mutable earth** sign. While an apt fixed-earth image is a compost heap (which takes a while to "cook" and decompose into "black gold"—a rich, fertile soil with a concentration of nutrients), mutable earth sounds more like sand, which is known for its ability to shift and easily reshape itself. Sand is a more fluid form of earth, one that is not all that solid to walk on. Virgo thus symbolizes an expression of earth that is able to yield readily to pressure and alter itself, rather than firmly resist. Virgo can bend and adapt in practical ways, while always looking for simple solutions that work well. What's not so simple is Virgo's near obsession with exactly how everything in life works, down to the finer, technical details. Mutability always stimulates curiosity, while earth gives careful attention to life's nuts and bolts. Therefore, Virgo excels in organizing its specialized knowledge of the more mundane facets of living.

Virgo likes to give attention to the small stuff in life, and wisely knows that even big, complex machinery can come to a screeching halt should nobody on the job notice one loose screw. Virgo, therefore, feels its mission is to attend to the minor, often overlooked issues of any project—it's an even keener observer than Gemini, due to earth's ability to concentrate patiently on one thing at a time. (Virgo's better at shutting out any unwanted distractions, unless it's a dripping faucet or a creaky floor.) Here we have a bright but down-to-earth intellect that seeks to get to the heart of any matter, without becoming sidetracked by nonessential issues (which is something harder for the remaining mutable signs to do).

Sagittarius is a **mutable fire** sign. If you overlook the apparent random destructiveness involved, a lightning-instigated, raging forest fire is a good metaphor for mutable fire. It's a blaze, triggered by a bolt from the blue, that quickly spreads far and wide—a form of fire that goes beyond its original boundaries to cover more and more territory, when left unchecked. (Actually, ecologists now know that Nature uses spontaneous forest and brush fires to help invigorate the ecosystems involved.) Sagittarius wants its own fires of inspiration to distribute themselves widely and to keep on spreading. Here, the enthusiastic side of fire is most easily dispersed. Sagittarian warmth and hopeful optimism can uplift many people at once, which explains this sign's urge to go out and greet the big world with its good news about life's greater meaning.

Sometimes mutability means that Sagittarius gets a little too widespread regarding its sincere beliefs—it suffers from too many sweeping generalizations about the big, important issues of life. It naturally

Pisces is a **mutable water** sign. Although Pisces is more emotional than mental in temperament, it's also capable of grand, abstract overviews of life—it is *the* sign most receptive to cosmological theories that attempt to unify all that exists under one universal law (even more so than Sagittarius). Pisces' scope of cosmic awareness can be vast and profound, partly due to how well both our left-brain and right-brain hemispheres can creatively unite. This sign may not sharply analyze details, yet Pisces has a knack for synthesizing many diverse factors and arriving at a better understanding of the whole picture of life, not just its bits and pieces. As a mutable form of water, Pisces also emotionally moistens everything it touches, like a gentle mist—not like the heavy drenching common to the rushing waters of cardinal Cancer, or the blast from a high-pressured hose that typically characterizes fixed Scorpio's intensity (especially when outraged). Pisces is more a light drizzle than a torrent of rain.

Mutable water suggests a feeling nature that is able to connect with life on a broad basis—emotional sensitivity is less contained (this is a boundless, pervasive expression of water). Pisces feels what all of life feels, a result of its mystical talent for linking with others in less visible ways. All the water signs are active on these invisible levels of energy-exchange, but Pisces seems the most unfettered in its ability to flow in and out of the inner worlds of others. Mutability implies versatility, and when combined with empathetic water, it means Pisces has a universal understanding of humanity and can sensitively interact with people from all walks of life. There must be a special reason why the zodiac concludes with this mode-element combination, which certainly sounds more malleable and flowing in its life approach than

One way to know the details of something firsthand is to first take it apart. Doing this is of great interest to Virgo—a sign that loves to break things down into their many interrelated pieces, and then study each piece intently while learning how that particular part is meant to function. What practical purpose does it serve, and how is it constructed to do its job? Next, Virgo studies how these pieces interact, as it puts everything together again in hopes of restoring things to their original wholeness.

The Analyzer also learns what can happen when certain parts don't interact well, and how this itself can lead to an overall malfunction. Virgo is the first sign to note the consequences of such disharmony—a theme carried over into Libra and even Scorpio, the next two signs to follow.

If details are that important to the understanding of how life works, Virgo's mind needs to be forever organized to enable it to weed out nonessentials. Gemini finds all information temporarily stimulating, but regarding such data, Virgo devises a rating system in terms of relevancy. The Analyzer's challenge is learning not to become overwhelmed by trivial issues—don't sweat the small stuff, in other words. Fussing with less-important details can sidetrack our main objectives and fail to help us build the momentum needed to successfully move forward in life. We find ourselves stuck in irrelevant matters that nonetheless eat up our time and energy. Virgo's job is to discriminate, to know what needs attention versus what can be put aside for the moment. Thus, being selective about what to focus its mind on is one of Virgo's big lessons.

Like a Virgin?

This is a good time to clear up one misconception: the Virgin is not necessarily virginal in a sexual sense, even though many Virgo types are cautious about the private, physical intimacies they share with others. Thus, Virgo may refrain from giving in to its sexual impulses in pressured, careless situations. Yet being earthy, Virgo knows there's a proper time and place for sexual activity. This sign is not the big prude that it has been made out to be—especially by those friskier fire

signs, whose policy is to have sex whenever the impulse hits. Virgo also knows that unplanned sex can later prove to be problematic (unwanted pregnancy, venereal disease, even wrinkled clothes on the floor). "Why let momentary passion invite such complications into one's life?" Virgo reasons. So the Analyzer lets its head rule its hormones in this regard.

Actually, the label of "virgin" more accurately implies that this sign strives to remain true to its essence—keeping its honor and virtue intact—rather than to allow itself to be penetrated and thus corrupted by the baser energies of others. Heck, Virgo doesn't even feel easy being around people who cough or sneeze, as if to say, "Don't pollute me!" Inner purity is valued (think of it as the desirable purity of "extra virgin" olive oil).

Virgo—following a phase of theatrical Leo behavior—wants to retain its real, unembellished nature. Remaining self-possessed is one way to help make sure this sign will stay relatively uncontaminated. Virgo obviously pays attention to those times when publicity-crazy Leo sells parts of its soul to the world in return for temporary notoriety. The Analyzer doesn't want to be owned by anybody or anything, and has qualms about becoming too public a figure. In this sense, Virgo is less socially accessible than Leo. In fact, much of what the Analyzer is all about seems to be an adverse reaction to Leo's self-promotional excesses. Of course, maybe it's better to say that Virgo seeks to refine (even redefine) much of how the Lion expresses its ego.

At Your Service

Before Virgo came onboard to give the zodiac a close-up inspection and a ratings review, all five previous signs (Aries to Leo) felt they had unconditional freedom to express themselves in any way they wanted to—warts and all. Now, their shared lament is, "Why did the Cosmos feel it had to hire this 'outside' efficiency expert to do a productivity check on us?" The Analyzer obviously makes these signs nervous, even more so by always carrying along its own regulatory manual of techniques guaranteed to improve day-to-day functioning.

This sign thinks it knows better ways to do just about anything, methods that it's willing to teach others to perfect. It plainly feels that the current state of affairs needs immediate correction before the zodiac can efficiently progress any further. After all, Virgo believes there are things that all the previous signs have mishandled in life, although the Analyzer believes that at least Gemini can be easily reeducated.

Surely, thinks Virgo, these five signs can try to do a better job at channeling their resources, and in more meaningful ways that not only benefit themselves, but even others in society. So why aren't they doing it? Virgo concludes that it's here to teach all the signs a few new tricks. The Analyzer just hates to see any constructive potential being wasted due to laziness, ignorance, or a lack of training or discipline. Virgo also brings to our attention a new life concept—the theme of willingly serving others. We can't all be selfishly preoccupied and still expect the bigger world to run like it should. There are many small jobs for all of us to do, and attitude adjustments will be required to perform those tasks uncomplainingly.

Cancer has a positive gut feeling about this new idea of "service," although it has never looked at the nurturance it instinctively gives to others in that light (to the Crab, it's more an act of love, not duty, of caring, not efficiency). Yet the other signs most likely think that Virgo has the makings of a pesky busybody, and they could be right! Virgo naturally plays the role of a censor attempting to suppress or eliminate what it finds to be objectionable (and the Analyzer—adopting a watchdog attitude—can readily object to many things in life). Its main motive, however, is to be helpful and useful.

Social service is somewhat an act of healing to the Analyzer, since it tries to do things that help make life better for all. This is a sign that thinks mainly of what will provide the best practical results for many people, not just for itself. In some ways, Virgo represents the zodiac at an interesting turning point in awareness—from a "me" to a "we" orientation. However, unlike Libra, Virgo doesn't feel equal to others, nor does it easily identify with its peers.

Fusspot

Virgo types claim never to be truly angry about anything—they're just peeved. A messy world can be so vexing to the Analyzer. Why do folks willingly do things the dumb or inconsiderate way? Why can't they take the time to do things right? (And who left this sticky gum wrapper on the floor?) What Virgo doesn't always recognize is how irritating its perfectionism can be to those who don't want to be flawless in all that they do. After all, making a mistake isn't the end of the world. ("Maybe," responds Virgo, "but making that same stupid mistake again and again is unpardonable.") Virgo believes in looking before leaping, and is amazed at those signs who either disagree or simply don't care. Don't we all want to know exactly what we're getting into before we're caught up in the thick of it? Isn't it always smarter to be fully prepared for what can go wrong before taking action?

Maybe so, but Virgo sometimes has a nagging way of getting its cautionary message across. People can feel scolded by the Analyzer, who always seems to have the right answers to everything, making this sign sound like a "know-it-all" (of course, Virgo may seem all-knowing because it studies life scrupulously). Virgo assumes that it's basically dealing with an incompetent world, and thus it doesn't trust that others necessarily know what they're talking about or doing.

The Analyzer will therefore test that assumption by asking a list of questions about the subject matter of concern. Virgo doesn't do well with vague or generalized responses, but perks up when someone has truly done their homework and it shows. This sign has a high respect for knowledgeable people. Still, others find Virgo's style of questioning to be annoying, as if they're undergoing an examination. The Analyzer seeks concise, precise answers, and doesn't tolerate rambling conversations or inarticulate responses.

Wherever we have Virgo in our chart is obviously where we want to deal in realism and clarity, yet we leave the door wide open for disappointment when we expect others to neatly package the information they give us. We feel almost compelled to establish order, but actually may unduly spend time attending to inconsequential matters

that we find to be so irksome. Of course, the more imperfect something is, the more our Virgo energy gets a chance to analyze the situation and hopefully fix that which is in need of repair.

Staying Fit

Every fire sign is followed by an earth sign. Perhaps fire's expression reaches a point where it becomes overenergized in dangerous ways that run rampant. Fire then becomes a destructive force. Earth acts as a necessary protective container that harnesses fire's flames. If the zodiac were to quit after the Leo phase—"Great idea, let's end on a high note," says the Lion—we'd all become burnt out from the fiery kind of high-charged, nonstop activity that always leads to self-exhaustion. Virgo follows Leo to teach us instead to replenish our precious physical, emotional, and mental energies. We do this by getting proper rest (fire signs hate to do this), nutrition, sensible exercise, and quiet time alone.

Everything in Virgo's world is to be done in moderation. Life cannot afford to have its brightest lights always turned on at their highest wattage. Virgo thus designs a dimmer switch that will help tone things down (and save energy from being wasted). Virgo's job is to regulate the body's various systems so that none of them become prematurely worn out from unhealthy overstimulation. The earth element is always trying to teach us when to stop doing something that can otherwise harm us. Naturally, fire signs find earth signs to be classic party poopers, but earth signs demand that we shut down for a while to conserve our vitality.

Virgo types seem to know that staying fit is very important to enjoying a satisfying life. And considering the workload that the Analyzer normally handles, good health is imperative. Sharing Leo's independent spirit, Virgo doesn't relish the idea of being beholden to anyone just because it's in poor physical shape and can't take care of itself. After all, Virgo is supposed to be the expert healer who learns which medications can relieve symptoms and restore health. This sign won't allow itself or anyone else to remain sick.

Wherever our Virgo is found in our chart, we are concerned with keeping things working as well as they can, even if periodic tune-ups are required. This is seldom an area of neglect (and when it is, we suffer in obvious ways). Perhaps our Virgo qualities are also evident whenever we appear a bit too nervous about the well-being of something or someone. Still, here is where we believe in using preventative measures to avoid major hassles later on.

The Studious One

Whatever Virgo does for fun will seldom involve other people. This sign observed the frenzy of attention that poor Leo received from spending too much time in the limelight, and decided that this wasn't the route it was going to take. Being modest and humble has its advantages. Virgo discovers that it's okay to be alone. It insists it will have its privacy, and one way to ensure that is to act with discretion in all matters. Don't try to stand out among the crowd or demand to be the leader. Blend in and disappear at times, and then nobody bothers you. Virgo would rather spend quality time learning how to develop a variety of useful skills than be socially out and about.

This sign would also love to be able to fix anything on its own rather than depend on hired help. To do this, Virgo teaches itself whatever it needs to be self-sufficient (remember, it doesn't trust the so-called "expertise" of others, so a "do-it-yourself" approach is appealing). It will work hard to learn how to do things well, painstakingly so, if need be. Like Gemini, Virgo learns much by asking questions—the "right" questions, that is. Since it's not willing to be as verbal as the Twins, Virgo seeks out reading material that is lucid and educational, written by those blessed with common sense, as well. All in all, Virgo likes to keep its mind sharp and in active pursuit of timely, pertinent information. It likes to have concise facts at its fingertips.

Mercury the Organizer

Mercury is Virgo's traditional planet, but here Mercury behaves less restlessly than it does in Gemini. The influence of earth helps this

planet stay more grounded and thus better able to concentrate for longer periods of time. This Mercury is discerning regarding the information it gathers (Gemini's airy Mercury, being less systematic, doesn't organize data as easily, and may get its "facts" from questionable sources). Flexibility is reduced when any planet is in an earth sign, but Virgo is nonetheless excellent at adapting to change in sensible ways (Gemini is more prone to scatter its mental energies when adjusting too impulsively and indiscriminately). The Virgo side of Mercury thinks things through logically, and then makes its final decision. It doesn't like dealing with too many options, which cannot be said of Gemini's Mercury.

Related to either sign, Mercury remains alert and observant of life's many pieces. Still, the earthier side of Mercury is better able to retain the most relevant information, while discarding the rest. It estimates what data will prove to be the most useful, and won't let its curiosity create needless intellectual detours. Virgo's Mercury stays better focused on its subject.

One problem here, however, is that this Mercury can become mired in too many details—a result of its ability to keenly observe the smaller things in life. Its gift of analysis makes it a sharpshooter when it comes to problem-solving (whereas Gemini's Mercury doesn't care to analyze anything too deeply, and only offers quickie solutions that may not get to the heart of the matter). Still, Virgo's Mercury has to be careful not to overresearch anything it finds interesting, as information overload results. When well managed, earthy Mercury knows the value of eliminating the superfluous and instead sticking to the most essential facts.

Closing Comments

Wherever Virgo is in our chart points to where we are learning to sharpen our critical faculties so that they can help us realistically assess existing conditions. Virgo is the enemy of faulty thinking and delusion. It favors down-to-earth solutions to life and shuns anything too abstract or impractical. The Analyzer is only interested in what is workable. It deals with what is evident, not speculative. At times, our

Virgo parts overreact negatively to disorder, fearing that we will be overwhelmed by chaos. This implies that Virgo is uneasy with the outpourings of our irrational unconscious, which can often seem uncontrollable.

Still, we can't expect to grow in self-awareness if we try to suppress this powerful, sometimes transcendent dimension of our inner world. Even emotionality can scare Virgo, probably because it's unpredictable (the unknown makes our Virgo side anxious) and also because it's harder to classify (plus emotions can makes relationships messy). We'll have to work harder with our Virgo energy to recognize that freely ventilating our feelings is as important to our health as making sure we get enough daily vitamins and minerals in our diet. It's also important to be less critical of ourselves and others whenever we have Virgo emphasized in our chart.

Famous Virgo Types (natal Virgo placements listed)

Sophia Loren, actress: Sun, Venus, Neptune
Sean Connery, actor: Sun, Moon, Mercury, Neptune
Chrissie Hynde, musician: Sun, Mercury, Venus
D. H. Lawrence, writer: Sun, Mercury, Jupiter
Lily Tomlin, comedian: Sun, Venus, Neptune
Leonard Bernstein, conductor: Sun, Mercury

Note

1. The Gemini stage of life gives the appearance of being socially oriented, since the Twins like to pick people's brains and find out everyone's opinions about everything. Gemini loves to feed its mind all sorts of interesting information. Still, it's main concern is intellectual self-stimulation—and if others learn something from Gemini's communication process, more power to them! Gemini is more self-involved with its knowledge-gathering than are the other air signs. By the time we get to Leo, we learn to risk creatively extending ourselves more publicly to others, who then either praise or criticize our "performance." Thus, other people's reactions matter a lot to how Leo sees itself, which creates an ego vulnerability that is less a problem for detached Gemini.

Chapter Four

From Libra to Pisces

Living in Two Worlds

The zodiac's first six signs (Aries to Virgo) enable us to build a solid concept of personal self that will prove indispensable to our ability to function on an individual level. One of the most important results of this process is the development and fortification of our ego, the seat of our "I" consciousness primarily in charge of our will to be. Interestingly, two out of astrology's three fire signs are found in this first half of the zodiac, emphasizing the importance of exercising will and ego early on in our development.

If most of our planets fall in these first six signs, we'll need to focus more directly on ourselves, to discover our strengths and weaknesses, before we can effectively go out and challenge or change the world. We'll have very personal issues to address that override our engagement in broader, collective concerns. That doesn't mean we should avoid altruistic pursuits until we first know who we are inside. Real life doesn't work like that. Yet it does suggest that we'd best avoid trying to escape from who we are by instead pouring all our energies into impersonal, global issues. (Let's not devote a lifetime to saving the rain forests from destruction until we have first taken a cold, hard look at our own unresolved problems—the psychological jungle inside us.)

Avoiding our internal reality won't keep us in good shape, no matter how much we appear to contribute to society or how many honors

we publicly receive for our unselfish, humanitarian efforts. The day will come when intense self-confrontation is forced on us, a time when our personal life may become quite disruptive and filled with inner turmoil. We then are made to turn our attention to our inner self in an attempt to sort out our interior conflicts. Remember, all this is necessary only if we've spent decades trying to run away from those private dimensions of our personality symbolized by the first six signs.

With undue attention paid to life matters related to the first six signs, we can become too entrenched in self-interest to the point that what happens to others on societal levels matters less to us. We're so wrapped up in our own little world that we truly don't care much about the pressing needs of humanity. We don't feel ourselves to be a part of life's bigger picture. To remedy this tendency, the zodiac continues its process with six new signs that can help us realize how much we need to willingly support society's larger frameworks. We can play more meaningful roles in the social evolution of the collective.

Society needs its reformers and social enlighteners to show the rest of us better ways to coexist in peace and understanding. These next signs put us in touch with expansive worldviews, where we shift attention from the exclusively personal to the impersonally social, and even to the transpersonally cosmic. Each of these signs also challenges the status quo of the first six signs. Suddenly, we feel we are trying to live in two worlds, and this requires balanced participation. How do we integrate our private needs with our public involvement? Life obviously gets more complex as we move from Libra to Pisces, yet the Cosmos knows full well that our spiritual self is up to the task of expanding our consciousness and allowing us to enjoy lives of fuller self-understanding.

Let's now examine the dynamics of these last six signs, keeping in mind that the following interpretations do not necessarily reflect the traits of people born with only their Sun in any of these signs. These descriptions are more apt to reflect the temperament of individuals who have several planets in a particular sign—especially the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, or Mars.



Libra

Taking Turns

Glyph: ♎

Symbol: The Scales

Mode: Cardinal

Element: Air

Planet: Venus/♀

House: Seventh

Motto: "We're in This Together—So Let's Share!"

Two-Way Street

Virgo, perhaps without even knowing it, sets us up for a major reorientation in consciousness—the Libra stage of life. The Analyzer knows it must tone down the egocentricity of Leo if people are ever going to be able to work together effectively (plus we can't have all leaders and no followers). In fact, Virgo seeks to refine or redefine the qualities of each sign that came before it—those first five that basically make up our individualized being. Analytical Virgo has determined that some signs have traits that are better applied to certain circumstances, although not to others. The Analyzer realizes that there is an appropriate time and place to do just about anything. We simply need to develop greater discernment, based on a careful, practical study of the issues at hand, rather than relying on intuition or gut instinct. Virgo is a cool-headed sign not given over to impulse.

To be able to even get this far in its awareness of life suggests that Virgo can pull back and evaluate conditions more objectively than any

other sign has done thus far. It's also learning how to deal with those pieces that don't fit so well together—a problem that definitely captures the Analyzer's attention—and thus, this sign is learning how to deal with dissimilarities (things that clash typically jar Virgoan sensibilities). It is a sign that seriously studies life's contrasting features. Libra, starting where Virgo leaves off, explores this theme even more intently: Can any two things (or people) that are unalike still join forces and work together cooperatively? Or are they forever incompatible?

At this Libra phase we learn to cope with factors that are different from one another—different, but perhaps complementary. Both Virgo and Libra seem to have a talent for arranging things to form more harmonious relationships. Virgo does it to satisfy a need for order and functional improvement, while Libra does it for more aesthetic reasons—harmony is a thing of beauty for Libra, not just a sensible way to make matters run smoothly. With this cardinal-air sign, we learn that there are others in life with whom we can form unions based on equality. This concept, of two or more people being on equal footing, had not been put forth before by the first six signs. It becomes a whole new way to view life, but not a simpler way. Two-way streets invite more traffic, and now we need to look both ways before crossing.

Alone No More

Libra (whom I'll call the Balancer rather than the Scales, which sounds too impersonal) seeks out others with whom it can mutually share life experience. This means more than just wanting company to avoid being alone (although that is partly the motive). Shared experience usually implies there'll be at least two different viewpoints to contend with, since people rarely see eye to eye in every matter (and Libra wouldn't enjoy that kind of union, anyway). But what if this entails two completely opposite opinions—like "Let's buy a used Chevy" versus "How about leasing a new Porsche?"

The Balancer ideally would love to reach an amiable agreement after hearing both sides and hammering out a solution—perhaps a compromise—that all parties involved can live with. Apparently, Libra

is skilled in the art of negotiation. The airing out of contrasting ideas is important to the Libran growth process (all air signs must get their thoughts out in the open, and cardinality is certainly not going to sidetrack issues—it pushes them to the forefront). Libra clearly wants to get things off its chest, but it prefers venting to a committed, trustworthy partner rather than to a bathroom mirror, especially under harsh lighting!

Libra comes alive when it can interact with a partner, whether love or war is in the air. Yet achieving just the right balance of give and take is not easy, since Libra also wants to be the recipient of all that it happily gives to its partner. It's not a doormat and it won't allow itself to be used, although it takes a while to decide to put its foot down and say, "No more!" The key to its true inner contentment comes from Libra's ability to make a marriage within itself, to harmonize its inner parts in ways that lead to peace of mind—the kind that cannot come from any relationship, no matter how intimate a couple appears to be. If the Balancer is secretly *out* of balance with itself, its partnerships emphatically reflect this discord.

About Those Scales

It may seem strange that Libra's symbol—the Scales—is the zodiac's only inanimate object. Libra introduces the impersonal concept of justice, an ideal that reflects the nature of cause and effect on moral and legal levels—"As ye sow, so shall ye reap." Those unfettered actions taken by innocently self-seeking Aries are now shown to have social consequences at this Libran stage of unfoldment. What is clear here is that we can't just do whatever we please, at least not at the expense of others. Their needs are to be considered now as well. We're learning to see both sides of a relationship, not just our own.

The scales of justice don't allow for special treatment in this regard. All who break the rules of proper conduct—including fair play and common decency—will suffer penalties. What goes around, comes around—hmmm . . . this sounds like karma in the making. Now we get to realize that inconsiderate action can have repercussions. Libra is a

sign of potential backlash regarding selfish behavior on our part (and it only gets worse in Scorpio). At this point in the zodiac, we realize that willful misbehavior will be punished—if not immediately, then at some timely point in the future. The zodiac has now made us aware that a day of judgment awaits.

What this also suggests is that normally sweet, charming Libra—on some deeper level—is immune to dramatic emotional pleas, clever rationalizations, or brilliant intellectual arguments when it comes to a violation of rights. The Balancer has been wisely dubbed "the iron fist in the velvet glove," suggesting that it can be "one tough cookie" who's surprisingly unyielding, even under strained conditions. True justice is not vulnerable to human manipulation. No one is above the law. This explains why Libra, when oppressively backed up against the wall, would sooner die for its principles than compromise under tyrannical pressure and lose its integrity.

This doesn't mean, once we get past its pleasing, social veneer, that Libra is a cold-hearted sign. The Balancer tempers justice with mercy. Yet it wouldn't be able to do so if it didn't understand human nature very well. Remember, Libra can see and understand many sides of an issue. Nothing is to be judged in rigid, black-or-white terms. A careful weighing of diverse factors is required.

Virgo provides us with an opportunity to try to figure people out, especially regarding why they sometimes do the dumb things they do. Libra goes further by sharpening its understanding of human psychology (while in Scorpio, we finally plumb the darker depths of the psyche to determine what needs a total overhaul). Libran types appear to be more understanding of social misconduct because they can recognize conflicting motives in operation that result in such behavior. Yet if aggravated enough, the Balancer will chillingly say, "Let the ax fall so that justice is served!" Libra then becomes an agent of karmic retribution.

Have a Nice Day?

Libra is very sensitive to the current atmosphere it finds itself in, especially wherever people congregate. Observing society in action is stimulating for this sign. While Gemini is also a "people watcher," it's not always willing to participate in relationships as fully—mutable energy doesn't urge us to plunge into experience in the energetically assertive way that the cardinal mode does (the one mutable exception is Sagittarius, due to its irrepressibly fiery nature). Libran types must have harmonious social contact on a daily basis and are quite unnerved when something enters the picture to spoil an otherwise pleasant exchange between people. It's a sign that believes in the cultural importance of courteous interactions.

Since Libra is also learning about disharmony—the other side of the coin—invariably somebody comes on the scene to cause a little friction that tips the scales, typically leaving the Balancer feeling quite out of sorts. (Virgo isn't keen on such disruption either, but then, this realistic earth sign doesn't harbor idealistic expectations about other people's behavior—it anticipates that they'll eventually screw up.)

Libran types need to be careful not to express too much sweetness and light, since it becomes very hard for them to sincerely sustain such an aura of peace (and some who try to do so are probably suppressing a lot of darker elements that then get projected on to antagonistic people in their lives). Libra can forever play the "smiley-face" game and pretend everything is beautiful, as long as nobody makes any waves or touches a raw nerve.

The ability to handle the downside of being human is also important to the Balancer's inner growth. Libra even has to learn to be a fighter, and not just of social causes. It needs to learn how to defend itself against direct, personal attack. The key is to fight fairly and intelligently (something Aries doesn't always do). Doing battle can be upgraded to an art form, and indeed, military strategists benefit by having natal planets in Libra.

It's okay to be kind to others and to show consideration, but it's not so hot when Libra feels it's always the one bending over backwards to please those who'd never think of returning the favor. Why risk getting hurt again and again by expert abusers who only look at relationships one way—their way! The Balancer needs to lovingly permit itself to give back as good as it gets, and to hell with having a nice day!

(Scorpio decides it's going to give back even more than it gets to those who really have it coming, as we'll soon see.)

Looking Good

Virgo is a sign that praises the virtues of good grooming—staying clean and looking neat and presentable require a degree of organization. How freshly things smell seems to concern this earth sign (it knows that anything with a rotten odor is probably not in a healthy state). Libra carries this theme of being well-groomed to a more ideal level—looking marvelous is sometimes even more important than actually feeling great. Appearance means a lot to the Balancer, and maybe that's because when we look our best, we attract the "right" people. Yet when we look like a skid-row reject, we repel them.

Libra feels its life will run better if it takes time to doll up and package itself as a class act. It's a sign whose more cultivated, polished image becomes a magnet for social approval. It's easy to see the shortcomings of only being impressed by things having such surface appeal. Yet Libran types aren't bothered by this because they know they're not shallow at heart. They just prefer to look at things that are pretty. Why tolerate ugly conditions? Let beauty and grace come to the rescue of weary souls everywhere!

The Marrying Kind

Libra is more than just the sign of one-on-one relationships, which can also imply those of an adversarial nature. It's a symbol of committed unions, and thus it governs the traditional state of matrimony. In this area, the Balancer seems most comfortable with the conventional, legal set-up—polygamy will never do (nor will that "group" marriage experiment that nonconformist Aquarius sometimes talks about). Regardless of sexual orientation, Libran types want an intimate partnership that society will endorse, and the Balancer is not ashamed to admit that it *does* care what others think (it's like Capricorn in this regard).

However, Libra also knows how unfair society can be whenever it tries to regulate the private lives of its members (perhaps here, Libra is at odds with rule-enforcing Capricorn for this reason). Air believes in

freedom of expression for all, and therefore adopts a "live-and-let-live" policy. But for itself, Libra would rather that its blessed union be bound by law, if possible—so where's the ring?

The ideal arrangement in Libra's mind would be for two people in love, who have much respect for each other, to join forces as self-determined individuals, each with a healthy ego intact. That's a situation the Balancer would value the most. Libra wants a marriage of equals (no previous sign thought of that possibility). This suggests that no one is to play a parental role, or one of a helpless child. Nor is one person to dictate the actions that another is permitted to take. Libra doesn't believe that partners own each other, just because of a marriage contract, and will balk at the thought of being unfairly controlled or dominated.

The problem is that Libran types can have stormy dialogues inside their heads that they dare not verbalize in any ongoing, difficult relationship, at least not for a while. Eventually the tables turn, as Libra unleashes pent-up anger and outrage over being poorly treated. A colder side emerges (those scales are made of hard metal) as the Balancer addresses all grievances it has suffered. It's nearly impossible to appeal to Libra's sweet side once this level of alienation has been reached. Yet until that day occurs, Libra is apt to forgive its loved one again and again (but it never forgets abuse, as it's always keeping score and will wait for the right time to issue an ultimatum, or else leave the union for good). Actually, at heart, Libra wishes that the honeymoon could go on and on . . . so why can't two people in love just try to get along?

Lazy Times?

It's hard to understand why Libra goes through its lazy spells, those usually reserved for that other Venus sign, Taurus. (Of course, the Bull can be one of the hardest-working archetypes the Cosmos ever created, and so it doesn't consider its rest periods to be akin to real laziness.) Libra is a cardinal sign, and cardinality wants to stay active and on the go. Being idle is not appealing to cardinal types. Also an air sign, Libra doesn't like to stay still for too long. It prefers to socially

circulate. Maybe Libra isn't as lazy as it may appear at times (heck, Leo could win the top prize here, since it will put off doing dull, menial chores when there's fun to be had elsewhere).

Libra is a sign that deliberates before making a move. It may even prod others to initiate daring activity instead, so that it can sit back and evaluate the results by weighing the pros and cons. Yet for itself, the Balancer will refrain from doing things until everything feels right, and who knows how long that will take? When we perceive so many facets of any situation, we probably have a harder time recognizing the one thing that we must first do to initiate action. That infamous Libran indecisiveness takes hold, and we seem to be stalling for time. Then, when we don't take effective action when others think we should, we can appear to be lazy procrastinators.

Actually, if being a little lazy is pleasurable ("I've earned this goof-off time," says Libra), then it's not such a big deal. It's probably even what helps keep the Balancer so even-tempered. Libra cannot handle prolonged stress without having needed tension-releasing breaks to balance out its energies.

Venus in Style

Venus is Libra's publicity agent, always out to make this sign look good. Yet it's a Venus that—while seemingly sophisticated—can appear contrived at times. Taurus' Venus goes for a more natural look of beauty, something that's not so perfectly chiseled and flawless. But airy Venus needs a little makeup and a stylish wardrobe to create just the right allure. The props that ensure beautiful results are important. In some ways, this is a more seductive Venus that literally can charm the pants off of someone, even though Libra's Venus likes flirting more than it does having sweaty sex (leave all that erotic sensuality to Taurus' Venus). Airy Venus believes that good taste must be cultivated. This side of Venus is more conscious and thoughtful in its development, which fits air's mental nature well.

Whether associated with either Libra or Taurus, Venus is a lovely, comforting energy to wrap ourselves in. In Libra, it is simply more a

relationship-oriented and less an object-related influence. That doesn't mean Libra won't enjoy being surrounded by works of art (it even can create such fine art); but people are its greater interest. Libra is more open to combat, when necessary, than is Venus (partly due to the pull of its opposite sign, feisty Aries). The Balancer can be argumentative and is stimulated by rousing debates, while Venus shies away from anything that comes close to saber-rattling or the need to raise one's voice in protest. Still, Libra loves to enjoy the good things in life and love, at least enough to satisfy Venus' refined tastes.

Closing Comments

Wherever Libra is in our chart describes where we don't wish to live for just ourselves. We'll want to include someone else in our personal activities, perhaps so that we can benefit from that person's feedback. The Balancer has a mind of its own, but it does like to field the responses of others before deciding whether it's on the right track. And if it's off the beam, Libra will modify its plans by incorporating the best advice it has received. It is a reasonable sign when it comes to accepting sound suggestions, but only from those it deems to be honest and level-headed. It's good that Libra can be as discerning as Virgo is, at least when making sure that emotions (often someone else's) don't get in the way of the mental clarity it seeks.

The more Libra is emphasized, natally, the more likeable we are—or want to be to others. We'll put our best foot forward to make a wonderful impression on those who, we hope, will then turn around and support our objectives. Sometimes that means we'll flatter people just to get them to join our side and share their talents, but perhaps we'll regret we did so later on, when some of these people prove to be more trouble to deal with than they're worth. Libra is a bit of a manipulator, an opportunist who justifies such behavior by thinking it's coordinating a project that hopefully will reward everyone who happily contributes their share. "You'll appreciate getting involved with me!" persuasive Libra says convincingly.

Famous Libran Types (natal Libra placements listed)

Matt Damon, actor: Sun, Mercury, Uranus
Gwyneth Paltrow, actress: Sun, Mercury, Uranus, Pluto
F. Scott Fitzgerald, writer: Sun, Mercury, Venus
Sigourney Weaver, actress: Sun, Mercury, Neptune
T. S. Eliot, writer: Sun, Mercury, Venus, Uranus, Ascendant
Christopher Reeve, actor: Sun, Mercury, Venus, Saturn, Neptune



Scorpio

All or Nothing at All

Glyph: ♏
Symbol: The Scorpion
Mode: Fixed
Element: Water
Planet: Pluto/♇
House: Eighth
Motto: "Trust Me—You Don't Really Want to Know My Secrets!"

Heart of Mystery

Scorpio is a fixed-water sign with an overblown reputation for being difficult to relax around. At first glance, it's definitely not the chummy type. Describing Scorpio as intense, penetrating, brooding, and even volcanic makes this archetype sound like something that's best left alone to quietly lurk in dark, hard-to-reach hiding places. The warning is that unnecessarily agitating a Scorpion who's within deadly striking distance is a very bad idea. Well, there is some psychological truth to this, but Scorpio surely doesn't see itself as the terrifying Beast of the Abyss.

Being a water sign, the Scorpion views itself more as a sensitive soul who's commonly misunderstood by others. Why misunderstood? Because Scorpio doesn't want to reveal what it's feeling in any simple, forthright manner (leave that to Aries). If anything, it only seems to generate a smoldering intensity that warns others to back off—don't dare get too close . . . not yet, or maybe not ever. Scorpio keeps its power-packed emotions under lock and key, and that alone can make

others feel suspicious and uneasy (things that Scorpio assumed it was the only one feeling). Just who is this masked stranger dressed all in gothic black? Scorpio's not too sure if it really wants you to know.

Fixed water sounds like a block of ice, which can be treacherous when in the form of an actual iceberg, whose imposing mass below the ocean is hard to detect at sea level (here, what you don't see can be more dangerous than what you do). Ice is also the hardest, least-fluid form of water there is. Likewise, Scorpio can be fixated in its focus and unable at times to just "go with the flow." It doesn't melt easily. Interestingly, this sign is a symbol of that which is either lava hot within us, or as frozen and impenetrable as the Arctic tundra in winter. No wonder Scorpio is considered a sign of behavioral extremes.

The Scorpion—probably as a reaction to Libra's friendly openness to people—realizes that, while intimacy can heal, it can hurt as well. Exposing our psychological innards to another involves utmost trust, and when we don't use good judgment regarding the partners we pick, such exposure of our private selves can result in criticism, ridicule, abandonment, or worse—betrayal. All water signs know they are quite emotionally vulnerable, but Scorpio, hating that fact, will do whatever it takes to hide such hypersensitivity. It makes the mistake of equating vulnerability with weakness (and, like Aries, Scorpio despises weaknesses detected in itself and in others).

So, while often appearing stone-faced and always in the iron grip of self-control, Scorpio becomes too emotionally cryptic and unapproachable for its own good. (Hey relax, Scorpio—not everyone's a trained bloodhound, just dying to sniff out your most guarded mysteries.) In spite of this standoffish behavior, Scorpio wonders why it so often deeply feels all alone, cut off from most social rituals it sees others happily engaging in all the time. (Gee, how come *they* aren't so paranoid about revealing themselves to others?)

Pride and Passion

All fixed signs seem to have an inborn sense of pride. Fiery Leo beams with obvious pride in its dynamic self-expression; less-showy Taurus is quietly proud of its ability to spot true value in the material world,

and even without having to pay a premium price!—it's proud of its bargain-hunting skills; Aquarius is proud that it is brilliant and free-spirited enough to avoid following conventional wisdom or partaking of anything designed for mindless, mass consumption. But the source of Scorpio's hidden pride is harder to track.

The Scorpion can be riddled with deep insecurity, the kind that makes its world appear untrustworthy. Yet, just try to deliberately humiliate a Scorpio—and then watch for signs of barely contained rage. Scorpionic fury may be felt even before a sense of shame sets in, if it does at all. (Here's when Scorpio transforms into a screaming eagle, shrieking "How dare you?" at the poor soul who was stupid enough to outrage this emotionally volatile sign, especially if in public.)

The bottom line is that Scorpio will not allow itself to be teased, toyed with, scolded, or even threatened in demeaning ways. Leo may indulge in its dramatic, royal pout when its pride has been wounded, but Scorpio aims for the jugular, at least on those psychological levels where it knows it can do more permanent damage. It's not too sure if it can ever "play nice" again once violated by another. But what about passion? Any sign capable of rage and fury is naturally loaded with passionate feelings.

In Scorpio, passion is even more intensified because it is often restrained or suppressed. Deliberately holding something back often only strengthens it, yet when it does finally come out, the Scorpion's passion can become too strong and uncontrollable a force. Scorpio types need to learn to release their heated emotions more often, before they build up and become too hot to handle.

Total Commitment?

The commitment theme that Libra first proposed can be taken to the nth degree in Scorpio. Libra thinks it knows how to establish healthy boundaries in relationships—as air needs its space to breathe—and it even welcomes another's individuality and willingness to dialogue. (It could be said that Libra prefers a significant other who acts more like a self-honest Aries, although one who's not as rough around the edges.)

"I'm this and you're that, so let's enjoy our differences," says Libra. "Let's blend our dissimilarities in mutually beneficial ways."

"Well, enough of that nonsense," mutters Scorpio. For perhaps unfathomable reasons, Scorpio types are uneasy with any partner who is too independent and self-willed. Maybe this is because it's harder to merge intensely with another who behaves like that. Scorpio also senses that such a person can and will be confrontational, the last thing this secretive water sign feels it needs in any long-term union.

The truth is, the Cosmos demands that Scorpio types become embroiled in periodic confrontations that help them peel away layers of secret motivation and unrevealed desire. There's so much cooking emotionally inside Scorpio that others never get to see, and this puts them at a disadvantage. Hmmm . . . what happened to Libra's ideal of fair play? Has its two-way street of communication now become a dead-end road of silence?

Scorpio is capable of putting up many psychological barriers, designed to forbid easy access to its underground world. Yet, unfairly, it demands total candor and commitment from anyone it chooses for a partner. That means others are always expected to come clean regarding *their* private, internal life—no secrets are to be kept from the Scorpion! And if needed, Scorpio will trespass on another's territory to get at any "top secret" information it feels it must have to stay in control.

Fixed water implies that this sign can hang on tenaciously to a few, select "others" for its emotional security, and thus has a difficult time letting go psychologically. (Gee, and we thought the Crab had a big problem here, but it seems Scorpio is even more obsessed about its attachments!) Others may not feel the depth of commitment that steadfast Scorpio does, nor do they ever wish to. If Scorpio wasn't such a control freak, maybe total commitment could feel like a warmly devotional state of caring. However, this sign is notorious for trying to do unwanted makeovers on people, from head to toe, inside and out. Others may not wish to be part of such a manipulative situation.

It's true that the Scorpion has a knack for picking up on other people's hidden potential—their buried treasure—but the measures it takes to tap that potential is what others find so intrusive and coercive. "I won't be satisfied until *you* become all that you were meant to be," is something we might expect to be told while training with an Olympics coach, but not from a parent or a spouse. If this is what total commitment really means—a kind of slow suffocation—then it's time for "loved" ones to bail out and leave Scorpio all alone, once again, to ponder why.

Deep Therapy

Scorpio observes Libra in action, and appreciates how sharply perceptive this air sign can be regarding the human condition. Libra is able to understand people's mental frameworks, which thus helps it view things the way others do—but it can't necessarily get under their skin to uncover more. That's where Scorpio comes in. This sign is gut-sensitive to the unseen, unspoken energies that are constantly being transferred in close, emotionally charged relationships. The Scorpion can pick up on the scent of trouble subterraneanly brewing between people, and it will follow any darkly lit trail until it finds the hidden source of such tension. It will then offer transformative ways to resolve the problem, or else it will take drastic measures to eliminate the conflict altogether. This is at least what it would do if stuck in such a predicament—fix it or dump it! (Libran indecisiveness is maddening to Scorpio, who'll instead pick at a problem until a crisis imposes a resolution of the matter.)

Self-aware Scorpio types are dedicated to the exploration of the mysteries of human complexity. They seek out knowledge, and perhaps wisdom, regarding the nature and power of our depths within—that realm where we undergo the beginnings of metamorphic change that later erupt to alter the entire landscape of our outer world. The more interior parts of our subconscious are where we keep well-shielded secret fears, hatreds, lusts, compulsions, and other discomforting feelings. Yet they'll continue to consume our energy and drain our soul if left in their toxic states.

Our Scorpio challenge is to discover how to stop being devitalized—or sometimes monstrously overenergized—by darker facets of

our psyche that need to see the light of day. When we can't find personal ways to accomplish this, alternative forms of therapy await those of us brave enough to explore such inner darkness. Scorpio discovers that it can see quite well in the dark, and thus can learn much about itself while descending deeper into its shadowy underworld.

Feeling Sexy?

The Cosmos once warned Scorpio that its archetypal assignment would be a tough but critically important one, and that this sign may at times feel cursed by those same powerful energies it seems to love the most. Sexual energy is one such mixed blessing. Taurus actually got the sex thing going a while back and found it a pure pleasure. (Apparently, the Bull doesn't think twice about a casual roll in the hay. If it feels good, do it—and then maybe make a sandwich and take a nap later.) Sex tends to be more of a fertility rite for body-loving Taurus, who feels something fruitful could come out this natural, earthy experience. It's at least relaxing.

However, things get more complicated for Scorpio, who knows it'll use sexual conquest to get at something else in another person, to perhaps dislodge some concealed emotion. Sex thus is used to provoke, as well as satisfy, a partner. Sex also helps the Scorpion release its own enigmatic intensities, helping this sign come alive in rejuvenating ways. Mere erotic pleasure is sometimes the last thing on Scorpio's mind—it instead seeks a total upheaval of the senses, perhaps triggered by a powerful orgasmic response, as Mount St. Pluto blows its lid!

It's odd that the zodiac's "sexiest sign alive" is also one that can suffer from intimacy hang-ups. Scorpio is more self-conscious about sex than folks would realize (it's a highly introspective sign and one plagued by a perfectionistic streak—something it "borrowed" from Virgo when it wasn't looking). The Scorpion fears being exploited for its sensuous appetites, yet it also dreads being overlooked or even underrated as a sex object—"What, you *don't* find me sexy?" And it's more performance-sensitive than it cares to admit. It's also hard to truly relax when you're this much of a psychic sponge, constantly soaking up other people's hidden feelings. Scorpio typically processes

too many conflicting energies at once, and thus has a hard time losing itself even in the moment of sexual surrender.

Death Wish

Scorpio is the sign of death and permanent closure. None of the previous seven signs ever thought much about dying until Scorpio came along (actually, Leo worried once about possibly blowing its lines and "dying" on stage—but it never contemplated physical death, the final extinguishing of waking consciousness). In Scorpio, we become aware that, as mortal beings, our life clock is ticking away. Each of us is allotted only so many ticks until our earthly sojourn is over. Scorpio has made peace with this, probably because it wisely senses that a different dimension of consciousness awaits us after our body dies. Scorpio knows that many invisible levels of awareness exist, simply because it traffics in them daily. Although Scorpio may fight the death process (it's even a medical "cat with nine lives" who exhibits amazing recuperative power), at some point it will need to willingly release such control and resistance, and allow for this final transition.

Meanwhile, the Scorpion realizes that it must undergo many other "deaths" in this lifetime. Not all of its fixations turn out to be magnificent obsessions. Much inner darkness must be dispelled for those Scorpios types who choose to deal with life's slings and arrows by vengefully retaliating. Toxic hostility, resulting from long-term, seething resentments, needs to die. The urge to destroy others who have emotionally wounded Scorpio needs to die. And the poisonous flames of jealous rage also need to be snuffed out for good. Anyone seeking deeper self-understanding would wish for the deaths of these troublesome psychological complexes.

Actually, this sign has little choice: Redeem all of that darkness or suffer in isolation. Scorpio can easily turn even its destructive energies within, stinging itself again and again, whenever it feels ultimately powerless to control things in the outer world. This self-defeating instinct must also be killed off if the Scorpion is to psychologically survive its trials in life and become truly empowered in all the best ways.

Back to Life

Scorpio is pressured to resurrect itself during those grueling times when it has emotionally bottomed out (devastated Scorpio types can feel depressively low about themselves in self-punishing ways). No other sign, except perhaps for Pisces, can reach such gloomy inner depths of pain and remorse. Of course, no other sign learns to grow as much from such difficult, emotional states. Anyway, this is not where Scorpio is meant to stay trapped forever. It's hard-wired to soar like an eagle, once it vibrantly brings itself back to life (note that Scorpio's stinger, pointing upward, resembles Sagittarius' arrow—implying that the concentrated energy in that stinger must be transmuted and aimed in the right direction before it can become a power source of inspiration).

Being one of the final six signs, Scorpio is interested in the welfare of society. It's no saint—and it even acknowledges the educational value of sin—but it is aware that true social transformation involves healthy human interconnections. Libra provides a few guidelines that Scorpio takes a step further. Libra's focus is on the outer packaging of harmonious, stress-free relationships. It tries to stay on the wholesome, upbeat side of human contact. Yet with Scorpio comes an unsettling awareness of the shadow elements of deeper relating, those less-observable energies underpinning any close, complex union. The Scorpion is sensitive to what is problematic in partnerships, to what needs fixing (even surgery). It therefore has an understanding of all people who are having a difficult time relating to others in life.

One result of this sensitivity is Scorpio's magnetic attraction to psychology in all its ramifications. What makes anybody become twisted and bitter enough to ruin their chances for intimacy and happiness in relationships? That's what the Scorpion wants to know, as well as why some people feel like losers, loners, outsiders, undesirables, outcasts, and other social rejects. (In contrast, Pisces doesn't need to know "why"; it just accepts and loves these folks, regardless.) Scorpio does feel empathy for those who don't neatly fit society's definition of "normal." The Scorpion suspects that if it really were to spill

out all its own secret feelings and desires, it could become a prime target for social rejection, as well.

Pluto's Heat

Pluto is a planet that never takes the easy way out. It's as good at complicating life as its associated sign, Scorpio. Both planet and sign will deeply probe into the human condition, searching relentlessly for qualities and traits that need to be overhauled—except that Pluto *really* means it! Scorpio battles between defensively holding on to its shadow stuff versus blasting it all to smithereens—at least those parts that refuse to be creatively recycled. Pluto shows awesome determination when fearlessly enforcing major change (stubbornness and insecurity are not Plutonian characteristics). Yet fixed Scorpio resists being pressured to totally alter itself, unless the final orders come from within.

Superficialities turn off both Scorpio and Pluto. What does interest them—which they then pursue obsessively and enduringly—are subject matters that most people find uncomfortable to explore. These two intense astrological influences describe individuals who have a gutsy boldness and a need to know the gritty, uncensored realities of life, dark as they may be. Pluto and Scorpio can also appear calm or at least restrained on the outside, which is deceptive. Their still waters not only run deep, but can transform into a constant state of boiling that can psychologically scald the unsuspecting. A challenge for Plutonians and Scorpio types is to keep their emotions from becoming too concentrated and overpowering. The more such feelings are held in, the more forcefully they erupt when provoked.

Closing Comments

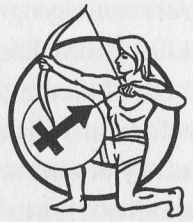
Wherever Scorpio is in our chart describes where we best not take things at face value. Life will give us good reasons to dig deeply here to uncover those unseen elements that control our situations more than we realize. Naiveté, on our part, can ultimately do us in. We'll instead need to be more watchful and observant of subtleties in others (the ol' eagle-eye approach). We will also need to be less obvious about our own intentions, since we are learning about the value of remaining

silent. It's good to hold back somewhat and quietly study the situation, wherever our Scorpio is. Others may scrutinize us here as well, yet we shouldn't make it so hard for them to contact our deeper side. Typically it's our job to pay keener attention to what's happening in our relationships, even if doing so makes us feel unsettled or angry about what we're unearthing.

Sometimes, too much Scorpionic self-control gets in the way of healthy emotional growth, as we bottle up feelings that later blow up and make a big mess in our lives for a while. But maybe that's how all-or-nothing Scorpio likes it—hold emotions in, then violently explode, clean up the debris, clear the slate, and start freshly empowered all over again! Indeed, Scorpio symbolizes a process often requiring that we separate from our past—sometimes by force—and then bravely learn deeper self-sufficiency by embracing a new life, where everything seems different and yet compelling to us. A force within our soul is now strong enough to handle whatever the Cosmos has in store. We're a survivor who's enjoying a well-needed rebirth.

Famous Scorpio Types (natal Scorpio placements listed)

Grace Kelly, actress: Sun, Mercury, Mars, Ascendant
Pablo Picasso, artist: Sun, Mercury
Marie Curie, physicist-chemist: Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn
Martin Scorsese, director: Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars
Jodie Foster, actress: Sun, Mercury, Venus, Neptune
Robert Kennedy, politician: Sun, Mars, Saturn



Sagittarius

Big World Out There

Glyph: ♐
Symbol: The Archer
Mode: Mutable
Element: Fire
Planet: Jupiter/♃
House: Ninth
Motto: "I Believe We're All Here to Do Some Good!"

Endless Journey

It's time to loosen up, since we're now moving from Scorpio's compressed world of emotional introspection to the high adventures of mind and soul sought by a spirited fire sign who loves celebrating the grander designs of life. Scorpio feels compelled to plumb its depths in darkness, but Sagittarius instead seeks the sunniest of days to explore the immensity of human experience on a global scale. This easily inspired sign feels like it's on some big mission of great collective meaning. In some ways, Sagittarius represents the wondrous fruits of soul resurrection achieved by Scorpio—it thus takes joy in the unfoldment of the future. Here we happily take to the expansive skies of a higher consciousness, one that allows us broader visions of what is and of what can be. The Archer enthusiastically views life in this wide-angled manner, and tries to uplift the rest of us so that we'll do the same.

Mutable Sagittarius represents fire in its most restless expression (which means something more than just being overactive, like Aries). The boldness of fire suggested here is less physical than intellectual,

and the journeys to be taken are more geographical than psychological. The Archer does not easily internalize its energies—it figures, "Haven't we already had enough of *that* in Scorpio?" Sagittarius may believe in the hellish dimensions in which Scorpio has sometimes found itself trapped, but it surely doesn't want to go there any time soon. It's packing its bags for other trips to take—the fun kind filled with awesome discoveries.

Wherever we have Sagittarius in our chart, we'll need to wander far from our familiar, comforting security symbols, the ones typically reinforced by our family conditioning. Travel, alone, puts us in contact with what is different from our background. The Archer realizes that, ideally, we humans are all the same—but culturally, we certainly are not! Mutability lends a curiosity about how people and things work, and the pioneering spirit of fire helps Sagittarius feel it's on a quest—in this case, a quest for understanding the world at large. The Archer hopes its journeys will never come to an end.

Community Spirit

This is the third and last fire sign of the zodiac. Fire always seems to usher in new experiences, and here it can be said that Sagittarius exposes us to more inclusive levels of human interaction. It's interested in how society, for better or worse, impacts the lives of many and not just of the few. Confronting "the big world" implies dealing with strangers, and not necessarily on a close, one-to-one basis. Sagittarius finds itself concerned with what's happening "over there," any place far away, even on the other side of the world. The Archer is learning to develop an international awareness of how varied all societies can be due to their cultural interests, their moral standards, their art, their language, and even their honored religions. Sagittarius find itself enthralled with all the facets that make each society unique.

Even closer to home, the Archer seeks to move beyond the personal dynamics of family life and into the broader fields of community involvement. This is the first sign to want to encounter people from all walks of life. It's not afraid of strangers or strangeness in others, which

helps it warm up to matters of universal interest; Sagittarius supports human diversity. Thus, the thought of reaching out and connecting with people, in an attempt to create a more ideal society, is very appealing to this civic-minded sign. Sagittarius is the "do-gooder" of the zodiac, the one always trying to drum up good cheer between people. It tries to promote ideals and visions that will fire others up, so that they, in turn, will enthusiastically contribute something of social worth that raises the awareness of many.

The Archer's mutability indicates that its growing mental interests keep changing. This sign doesn't seek to build enduring structures that result in entrenched traditions (even though it's the sign associated with organized religion). Sagittarius instead takes on the role of a social prophet, the one to show others "the light" in hopes that something big and beautiful will come out of any revelations that this sign upliftingly offers. The dream of a model society—one that honors individuality and freedom—is what Sagittarius has in mind. Of course, it's a naive vision that doesn't take into account the need for rules and regulations (Capricorn takes over those necessary parts of society-building).

If everyone was equally high-minded, honest, and decent—as the Archer feels itself to be— then perhaps few, if any, laws would need to be made and enforced. We'd instead always be doing the right thing in ways that benefit everyone. Lofty, idealistic Sagittarius doesn't always understand why society's ironclad codes are so inflexible, and thus it fights against all authoritative restriction while thinking, "These dumb laws don't apply to me!"

Gotta Have Truth

The concept of Truth may seem abstract and arbitrary to some signs, but it is of vital importance to the Archer. A world of theoretical possibilities opens wide for this ever-expanding sign, who's in hot pursuit of knowing what the Universe is really all about. Is there one overarching Truth that determines the "real" nature of all else that exists? Is this what God is all about, or even what physicists have named "unified theory,"

which speculates on the possible—and as yet unproven—existence of a single, determining law that can explain *all* fundamental energy interactions in existence? Leave it to Sagittarius to ponder the workings of life on even this cosmic a scale. The big picture can get mighty BIG for this sign!

One problem here, in defining Truth, is that fire signs are not all that objective about anything they feel strongly about. Sagittarius especially wants to plainly see that which it already believes to be true, in its heart. It claims to seek the ultimate reality underlying anything, but it has a gullible, credulous nature that keeps it from recognizing life's less glorious side. The Archer is not realistic or detached enough to handle life's more depressing truths.

Whatever it wholeheartedly believes in is something that it deems to be absolutely true and right for all, not just for itself. That's when it is more than willing to get on its soapbox and proclaim stuff like, "Everyone will need to become a vegetarian before they can find true inner peace!" It's typical for Sagittarius to make such flat-out statements that sound a bit on the dogmatic side. There is a "know-it-all" quality to this sign that suggests it doesn't easily recognize all sides of any issue, just the one it preaches—it feels it's correct about its beliefs, and everyone else is a poor, unenlightened soul needing to be shown a higher path in life.

The Archer puts much stock in universal principles that guide humanity's development. It has faith in all unseen influences that benevolently help shape the course of human destiny and even the fate of nations. Sweeping assumptions about how things "really are," in terms of universal energies, are fortified by the Archer's certainty that its visions reflect clarity and purity, leaving little room for distortion. (Sagittarius was undoubtedly the first sign to utter these words, "God has spoken to me, and He said . . .") It's nearly impossible to convince Sagittarius, once inspiration has taken over its entire being, that it could be all wrong about its cherished beliefs.

Jolly Saint Nick?

Sagittarius represents a part of human nature that is willing, in most cases, to give more than it gets back from others. Not even normally gracious, agreeable Libra is willing to do that (and when it does, it often backfires for the Balancer). Yet it seems as if the Archer has an inborn sense of abundance and a surplus of goodwill that allows it to be generous in spirit. It never feels like it's a loser—at least not when it still can freely give of itself to a world in need. Sagittarian emphasis in our chart shows where we can be like Santa Claus, ready to hand out bag loads of gifts for the happiness of all. These are typically gifts of the mind and spirit that we offer. The Archer, like Leo, has a big heart, but is driven to give for less-egocentric reasons, and isn't as prone to dictate how others are to use its gifts, except as joyously and unselfishly as possible.

Sagittarius is a firm believer in the importance of doing good works. It knows the big world has big needs that only those blessed with ongoing hope and optimism can fulfill, but certainly not cynics and misers. Sagittarius gets as far as it does in life because it really likes people. This is probably the zodiac's most gregarious sign, one that doesn't seem to mind at all who it gets to rub shoulders with—the more the merrier—as long as the energy level remains high and everyone's feeling full of pep and enthusiasm. Plus Sagittarius can be quite boisterous. Still, even if sometimes too loud and going overboard with glee, the cheery Archer is only trying to bring a smile to others and get us all to laugh ("Ho, ho, ho"), and maybe even teach the world to be thankful for its blessings.

Nature Trail

Sagittarius actively enjoys the great outdoors, perhaps more so than any other sign. Of course, Taurus loves Nature's quiet, maternal side, especially from the security of the Bull's own backyard. Taurus not only likes to patiently grow plants from seed, it also desires to stay protectively close to its well-tended garden patch, where it can watch the vegetative process slowly unfold. As Taurus relaxes in its familiar

natural settings, it is soothed by the animal sounds that abound, by the fragrant scents in the air, and by the comforting warmth of the sun's rays—things that are all pleasing to the senses. For the Bull, the living is easy when Nature is at its most green and fertile stage. However, the kind of nature experience that the Archer gets excited about goes way beyond the birds and the bees.

Climbing Mount Everest is more a robust Sagittarian interest than potting pink petunias. For the Archer, the natural world is something to be adventurously explored rather than just appreciated for its beauty while we rest in a hammock on a lazy, summer day. Fire is forever on the go, burning up its energy with vigorous activity. Mutability doesn't like staying still for long and will take off in many directions. Thus, Sagittarius is happy when running, riding a bicycle, flying a plane, sailing a ship, taking a train, or hiking on a nature trail.

Sagittarius therefore likes to be in movement while it's enjoying Nature. And it loves to combine the outdoors with elements of risk and excitement, resulting in activities such as skydiving, hang-gliding, skiing, big-game hunting, and white-water rafting. There is obviously a reckless side to the Archer, who seldom feels it's in mortal danger—after all, how could something that's so much fun be perilous? Sagittarius reminds us, "You gotta have faith that the angels are always watching out for you!" Amazingly, such a trusting attitude works well for this sign, perhaps more than is warranted.

Faith Healing

A refinement of the ego is what mutable fire suggests. Aries and Leo can be fairly self-centered in the pursuit of their goals—especially the Ram—but Sagittarius' ego satisfaction is tied to the role it plays in helping society improve. Sagittarius is not a power freak (although it is sandwiched in between two signs—Scorpio and Capricorn—that have the potential to be so). The Archer wishes for great things to happen to all people, not just to itself, and thus is less self-seeking in its aspirations.

Fire usually believes in its own ability to direct its life, without outside interference. Aries and Leo have no trouble doing that, but Sagittarius is flexible and open-minded enough to yield to outside authority—that is, a supreme authority: the vast, underlying Creative Intelligence that ensouls all that exists. Whether called God or Spirit, this boundless concept of divinity at work is thus born in Sagittarius. Great faith is placed in an unseen, protective guidance that benevolently helps the Archer along on its life journey.

Relying on faith to get what it wants—instead of sheer ego assertion—is what puts Sagittarius in a category all its own. No previous sign had ever looked for inner support from spiritual sources, although Scorpio felt close to doing so at times when its own darker moods led to desperation and despair. No sign, until now, has considered the possibility that a Universal Mind exists. Sagittarius is not a mystical sign (that's Pisces). It does like to have its spiritual beliefs backed up by more concrete frameworks (perhaps a venerable holy book, if not an actual visionary leader to provide the answers). There is a surprisingly orthodox side to the Archer that seeks to uphold even ancient traditions and rituals. Whatever its beliefs, Sagittarius attests to the healing power of hope and faith, seeing them as forces for good that can move both mighty mountains and human hearts. Without Sagittarian faith, life may seem bleak, meaningless, and much too worldly in heavy, oppressive ways that wear down our souls.

Luck of the Irish?

Less-philosophical Sagittarian types—those who choose not to depend on divine guidance—still can't help but note that they can be pretty darn lucky throughout their lives. They've seen a few times when situations could have turned out much worse than they did, all because of fortuitous, last-minute events (these are the folks who, due to an unexpected traffic jam, fail to catch a plane, only to hear later that it crashed minutes after takeoff). Is this dumb luck? Maybe so, but Sagittarius will eventually want to know why it's been singled out for protections that others apparently never receive.

Even nonreligious Sagittarian types—when things are going a little too well—will find themselves looking upward, wondering, "Thanks, but why me?" It will be a test of the ego to see if this sign's famous

lucky streak will make the Archer assume that it's *always* going to be the privileged one who's never slated to undergo hardships in life. Sagittarius may arrogantly believe itself to be immune to ordinary, human limitations.

Luck may be well deserved. Its source—not necessarily something magical or angelic—may stem from the state of well-being dwelling inside good-natured Sagittarius. Fortunate outcomes become the result of the Archer's deep acceptance of plenitude in life. Positive thinking acts like a magnet, drawing in advantageous conditions. This sign acts as if it was born with a Master's degree in prosperity consciousness. It is preprogrammed to expect gain, not loss, to anticipate the best, not the worst. It trusts that life unfolds with basically good intentions, and that the future looks promising, not dismal. All this adds up to create powerful energy currents that manifest as lucky breaks in life. This isn't dumb luck at all—it's the smart kind!

High-Spirited Jupiter

Jupiter is the planet associated with Sagittarius. The solar system's biggest member finds itself at home with a sign that loves to keep enlarging its perceptions of life. Both planet and sign show an interest in stretching our mental potential. They urge us to increase our ability to know all about the world around us, especially in terms of understanding its larger patterns of meaning. Jupiter is buoyant enough in attitude to relate to equally exuberant Sagittarius. Together, they promote an upbeat philosophy of living that helps our spirit soar to greater heights of awareness.

Fiery Jupiter shows the same infectious enthusiasm that the Archer does, but it is able to sustain its exhilaration for longer periods of time, due to its greater devotional streak. It's less restless for change than is Sagittarius, a sign as notorious as Aries for its short attention span (that's probably because the Archer knows there is *so* much in life to which it wants to become exposed, and yet there is so little time to do it all—whereas Aries' lack of enduring attention is more a case of disinterest).

Sagittarius, being mutable in disposition, is prone to waver, waffle, switch sides, weasel out of things, pass the buck, or renege at the last minute—especially when it's starting to feel trapped by a commitment (mutable signs always think they have a perfect right to change their minds, no matter what they've previous promised—and this is doubly the case for the fiery Archer). But all the fire planets (Sun, Mars, and Jupiter) are filled with the drive and courage to blaze on, as if impervious to obstacles in their path. Jupiter would rather think it will succeed in its endeavors than fail. Why bail out when you know you're going to end up a winner? Of course, both Sagittarius and Jupiter can be victims of poor judgment (maybe more so overconfident Jupiter). They lack the power of discrimination found in Virgo and the earthy side of Mercury, and thus they'll need to pay closer attention to life's smaller but critical details.

Closing Comments

Wherever Sagittarius is in our chart describes where life is trying to show us how good things can be, if only we'd just have more trust in ourselves. Fear or narrow-mindedness never works in our favor here (or probably anywhere else). Yet sloppy thinking, based on a reluctance to apply a little logic and reason to our circumstances, can result in big disappointments. We overestimate our potential, or misjudge what our environment can offer us. Also, the grass is not always greener elsewhere, so let's be careful not to literally run away from any current problems needing to be squarely addressed (those same problems will crop up in our new locale). Actually, if we try to get in better contact with our spiritual self—our trusty inner guide—situations can turn out very well for us. Our faith can create a few miracles, within reason. But procrastination or unrealistic expectations keep us from feeling rewarded by life.

Our Sagittarian parts also urge us to get beyond our petty, small-world concerns by volunteering to do something noble and inspirational to help society raise its consciousness. Give us big, important social projects to energetically crusade for, ones that promote the welfare of others on broad, humane levels. Yet Sagittarius doesn't want to

be all alone championing such campaigns. It needs to network with people of good faith and honorable intentions. (However, Libra is willing to teach the Archer about the art of tact, since one of Sagittarius' less-attractive traits is that it's too blunt in its observations and judgments about society's shortcomings. Libra suggests dipping into diplomacy's honeypot to sweeten the Archer's fiery rhetoric.) Sagittarius points out where we have a talent for spreading the right vibes needed to boost team spirit, the kind most necessary for fulfilling high-minded goals.

Famous Sagittarian Types (natal Sagittarius placements listed)

Noel Coward, songwriter-actor: Sun, Mercury, Saturn, Uranus
Margaret Mead, anthropologist: Sun, Mercury, Uranus
Mark Twain, author-humorist: Sun, Venus, Mars
Tina Turner, singer: Sun, Mercury, Venus
William Blake, poet-artist: Sun, Mercury, Jupiter
Bette Midler, singer-actress: Sun, Mercury



Capricorn

A Slow, Steady Climb

Glyph: ♑
Symbol: The Goat
Mode: Cardinal
Element: Earth
Planet: Saturn/♄
House: Tenth
Motto: "Life Makes Me Wait—But I'm Worth It!"

Let's Get Serious

The initial spark of personal self-interest—symbolized by Aries—has by now gone through a major process of maturation by the time we arrive at the Capricorn stage of development. One result of this is an awareness of our individual responsibility to help build a strong society based on enduring collective values. Social structure on a large scale is what interests the Goat. Sagittarius gave us the vision and the ideals needed to theoretically improve the human condition, but Capricorn provides the organizational know-how to make worthy social dreams come true. The Goat is ready to deal with the masses on a serious, committed basis, typically by taking on offices of leadership and responsibility. This cardinal-earth sign is a dynamic mix of duty (earth) and the push to make things happen (cardinal). Capricorn can be assertive in how it tries to take control over societal matters, and is ambitious and eager to merit approval from those already operating from high positions.

Capricorn vows to make society a safe and orderly place for its hard-working, law-abiding members. One way to ensure this, at least in Capricorn's eyes, is to set up rules and regulations designed to keep the masses from creating instabilities that could lead to anarchy—the Goat's worst nightmare is a lawless world run amok. Someone's got to be in charge of it all! Thus, the roles people play in life—especially our professional roles—are very important to Capricorn. Everyone must serve a needed social function and be productive if society is to keep from falling apart.

Capricorn is aware of Sagittarius' many inspired social theories, but the wise Goat will only implement those few broad-based concepts that have practical, timely value. This is perhaps the most realistic, no-nonsense sign of the zodiac, and one that doesn't want to waste its energy in the pursuit of unworkable objectives. Capricorn has a healthy regard for things that endure, things that start off having a solid framework. Dealing with such worldly issues is serious business to the well-organized Goat, who truly feels its mission in life is to help chart the course of collective development in sound and sane ways. (Starting with Sagittarius, the life themes of the last four signs become increasingly people-oriented on more impersonal levels. The needs of the masses are considered more important than those of the individual.)

Born Old

It has been commonly observed that Capricorn enters the world possessing a wisdom normally reserved for the elders of any tribe, not its youngest members. It's not so much what the Goat says at an early age that gives this impression of being a sage—since Capricorn tends to be reserved in youth and may not even flow with words—it's that this sign has a savvy way of sizing up adults in a manner that allows it to partake of their world much earlier on than the other signs. Capricorn studies power roles in society and finds the benefits of all prestigious positions quite appealing. It is thus willing to behave in the self-disciplined, obedient manner needed to claim such power and privilege for

itself—amazingly, many Goat types understand all this by the time kindergarten rolls around!

Young Capricorn types know that grownups are suckers for a well-behaved child, one who also just so happens to be an expert at "kissing up" to authorities to gain their respect and admiration. This may sound opportunistic, yet it's not due to being phony, since Capricorn naturally excels in calculated behavior, a byproduct of its cautious disposition. It doesn't like feeling out of control, and shows unchildlike restraint and composure. It also aims to please, although not in a Libran sense, where the specific goal is to be loved and liked.

The Goat instead caters to the expectations of others in hopes of making a good impression, one that later pays off when embarking on the road to worldly success. (Capricorn, very concerned about its reputation, will work hard to make sure its credentials are impeccable—how can it expect to enter society's upper echelons without them?) Even at a tender age, this sign knows it has dues to pay before it will be allowed to become somebody important in life—nothing comes for free in the Goat's world, and certainly not without dedicated effort.

Sterling Citizen

Much has been made of Capricorn's tendency to be so one-pointed about its ambitions that it can become cold-hearted, ruthless, and power-driven. In real life, most Capricorn types know, historically speaking, that brutal dictators in society eventually fall from power in a state of disgrace, and are forever hated for having suppressed the masses. This is *not* what the Goat wants for itself—a humiliating ending and a permanent stain on its standing in the world.

Still, in professional matters—when operating in the seat of command—Capricorn can appear as the stern parent who's always ready to crack the whip or lay down the law. It demands focus and efficiency from all involved. ("Work as hard as I do if keeping your position means anything to you," warns the Goat authority in charge.) Capricorn can thus become a hard taskmaster who can intimidate weaker souls or those who lack direction. It's not trying to scare anyone needlessly—it simply wants the best performance possible from those it

employs or does business with. There's a low tolerance for incompetent folks who mess up and indirectly make the Goat look bad.

Yet behind this apparent bossy streak—and this need to socially advance—is this sign's underlying belief that its destiny involves contributing something meaningful and lasting to society. It knows it's not here to live merely for itself, but instead to help build something that is of social worth to many, something that benefits the world. Capricorn knows its goals require it to keep climbing the mountain of ambition until it reaches the summit. It's only from this peak that it can demonstrate its expert skills of management and organizational enterprise. And it is driven to act in honorable ways that earn society's praise. It may seem tough and determined when achieving its set goals, but integrity is on its side. The Goat's humility is not always apparent, but it keeps this sign grounded, no matter how successful its life turns out.

Fame

Capricorn also has a side to it that wants to be recognized as somebody special, except that it is not always sure if it's worthy of such elevated status. Leo never doubts that it's a born superstar, but the more down-to-earth Goat frowns on those who unnecessarily show off their greatness. It also believes nothing in life is to be given freely on a silver platter. If anything, Capricorn's early introduction to the limitations of the world left an indelible impression: Climbing to the top in society requires constant struggle and perseverance—and most of all, sure-footedness.

Bouts of self-doubt and discouragement plague the Goat, yet surges of inner strength and fortitude compel it to become a high achiever, one who can surpass all former limitations. None of this comes about because of sheer will. Capricorn works unendingly at whatever it eventually becomes famous for (and being a cardinal sign, it always feels it needs to accomplish more and more. Cardinal signs sometime never know when to quit pushing.).

Not all Capricorn types are born to experience fame—at least not in a glamorous, Hollywood sense—but they do need to feel sincerely

recognized for their dedicated efforts within their chosen fields of social contribution. Career status typically becomes important, as do all the perks that come with social prominence (like Leo, the Goat demands first-class treatment, but only once it has earned it). Yet if all this is apparently not forthcoming—and the Goat will patiently wait before finally giving up—a sense of being defeated by a cold, uncaring world can create bitterness and a slump of depression (even reaching the top and then disappearing from the spotlight, due to events beyond the Goat's control, can prove devastating). Smarter Capricorn types sense that fame may come at a steep price, so they're careful not to want it too much—but if the Fates and the public insist, well, that's another story!

Getting Chilly?

Maybe due, in part, to its association with the winter solstice and Saturn, Capricorn represents things that are on the chilly side. Coldness at least suggests a lack of surface heat. The Goat may not appear warmly emotional, and can seem a bit icy in temperament—especially when it has been humiliated in public and its first instinct is to withdraw (even if it instead stands firm and aggressively defends its honor).

Yet, like Pisces, the Goat can be a chameleon, in that it easily slips into socially appropriate behaviors that others expect under certain conditions (meaning that Capricorn can effectively appear convivial in social circumstances that call for an engaging outgoingness). Capricorn doesn't feel it's faking anything here. It is simply adapting to the requirements of the moment in ways that give it the advantage needed to succeed in its ambitions. This, again, is not considered phoniness on Capricorn's part—it's a strategic move. The Goat always has darn good reasons for behaving the way it does, yet seldom is it ever truly caught off guard in a manner that exposes its hidden vulnerabilities.

Still, its cool and reserved side can lead others to assume that Capricorn is uncaring (the same could be said of its opposite sign, Cancer—at least on those moody days when the Crab uses its shell as a shield). The Goat seems to be "all-business" in its demeanor, leaving the impression that—although crisp, efficient, and tightly organized

—it is somewhat flat in its feeling nature. Earth signs never go too crazy with the expression of emotion, yet Capricorn is such a traditionalist who's sentimental about things of the past that it can get awkwardly misty-eyed. That's how we know the Goat's heart is not made of tin. It's just that Capricorn normally sees the world as a place that can hurt those who forget to wear their protective suit of armor in public, and thus the Goat's soft and cuddly parts are guarded and seldom exhibited.

The Parent Trap

Capricorn is one of two signs that astrology associates with parental attitudes—in this case, paternal ones (it's the sign of the father archetype); Cancer—the other sign—deals with the archetypal role of mother and other related maternal themes. The Crab needs to move deeper into the heart of the family dynamic in order to trigger its feeling nature and to establish an inner foundation of personal security patterns. On the other hand, Capricorn seems pressured to initially move away from anything that offers Cancerian, womblike protection. It instead tries to make the busy, outer world its home. (For the Goat, the ideal of domestic bliss doesn't hold a candle to the satisfaction of wielding executive power.)

While parental roles have changed dramatically in the last several decades, the functions of a mother and a father were, at one time, unmistakably clear-cut, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. Mothers stayed home to protect the nest and lovingly raise their offspring (moms also helped teach their children to feel both inner and outer security on elementary levels). Dads, hardly ever at home, went off to conquer the world and establish their place in the larger social scheme of things (dads taught their kids about dutiful commitments to nonfamily members). Mothers were close, accessible, and responsive to their children's emotions; fathers were far away, unavailable, and less aware of their children's inner lives.

Cancer and the Moon thus made symbolic sense when describing the intimate maternal side of life, while Capricorn and Saturn suited a child's impression of the more impersonal paternal experience. However, in today's world, traditional parental functions are less rigidly defined. Ideally, both parents now play out Cancer and Capricorn roles for their kids.

Like watery Cancer, earthy Capricorn is very protective, although more in the no-nonsense manner of a security guard on patrol. The Goat has to be careful not to overcontrol people in its attempt to provide them with safer and more structured ways to live. Capricorn types, no matter what their age, may try to take charge of others (even the younger ones may want to parent the adults in their lives, especially emotionally immature adults who behave irresponsibly). The Goat feels responsible for instructing people in how to conduct themselves. It tries to curb social behavior that it deems to be inappropriate or even a threat to conservative society—Capricorn targets not just lawlessness, but any actions it finds immoral (Sagittarius—a sometimes opinionated sign willing to pass judgment on others—first got this morality thing going during its fiery search for what "right" paths in life to take.)

As folks with lots of planets in Capricorn feel duty-bound, they can feel guilty when another side of them instead wants to feel free from obligations and less weighed down. However, early life has taught the Goat to be tough and not complain about what life doles out. Capricorn somehow knows that adversity and uphill climbing will only help its character grow stronger and become more resilient.

Saturn's Steady Hand

Saturn is the planet with which Capricorn is most comfortable—the Goat probably likes the security of this planet's famous rings, resembling protective moats surrounding a fortress. Saturn's earthy sensibility appeals to pragmatic Capricorn. Both planet and sign are quite reliable and are willing to work hard to attain their well-defined goals. However, cardinal Capricorn really doesn't care for the slow, deliberate pace that seems natural to Saturn (cardinal signs are the "ants in the pants" group, always eager to take action). If anything, life forces the Goat to wait, and not rush into experience, which later ensures that this sign is expertly prepared when its time has finally come.

While Capricorn hustles and bustles to make a name for itself, as it elevates its social standing, sober Saturn quietly plods on, often unnoticed. Capricorn more actively creates the right climate for the recognition it craves, while conscientious Saturn does good work but shies away from the limelight (Saturn is monkish in behavior and is in need of silent retreats, more so than the attention-seeking Goat).

Both Saturn and Capricorn are willing to be held accountable for their actions, a thought that causes them little anxiety, since their actions are typically honest and law-abiding (these are not the rule-breakers of astrology). The Goat—perhaps in its need to appeal to those of celebrated status—is more lively and socially adept in behavior than Saturn, a planet that seeks an ordinary lifestyle with less fanfare, and one with fewer people involved. Capricorn, while not gregarious in a Sagittarian sense, does thrive on social interaction with those who are going places and doing important things. Capricorn created the concept of the "in crowd," made up mainly of those on the Goat's private "A-list" of most desirable contacts—but as this sign is status-conscious, it has to watch out about becoming too snooty and elitist. Saturn is better able to relate to decent, everyday, plain-living folks who are just trying to stabilize their world and survive life's harsh realities. Saturn is more of a hard-working, blue-collar planet.

Closing Comments

Wherever Capricorn is in our chart describes where we may feel we're given tests in life that require our stamina and patience. We have purposeful needs here and we want solid results. Yet things will take time to ripen. It's common for us to use our Capricorn assets to advance our professional goals, and to help us garner social praise and respect. If the Goat's conservatism gets the best of us, we may come off here as a little too stiff—even rigid—in how we handle our duties and our social relations with others. (Sometimes Capricorn and Libra can become maddeningly proper and polite in demeanor, and much too formal for certain occasions.)

Capricorn's driving ambition helps us attain positions that allow us to feel self-important—and immensely useful. Being more than just

an ego boost, this awareness of having personal significance motivates us to help strengthen society's foundation and keep its structure intact. Capricorn obviously supports the status quo and enacts needed reforms slowly, after much careful consideration. If we apply this to our personal life, we may find that a fear of change creeps into the picture, and even a dread of the unknown. Upholding the status quo may thus be done for defensive reasons, not simply for the purpose of stability.

Let's not forget that since Capricorn is cardinal in nature, we're less able to get stuck in ruts wherever this sign is emphasized in our chart (unlike fixed Taurus). Life forces us to devise sound solutions to remove whatever obstacles are temporarily blocking our path, and then we're to get on purposefully with our lives. Our Capricorn parts teach us to wise up about the ways of the world. Adopting a pragmatic outlook is valuable, as long as it doesn't convince us to suppress our creative juices, vivid imagination, or flights of fantasy. We don't need to be as grounded as a lead balloon, but simply anchored enough in practical realities so that we can build worthwhile material structures for ourselves and our society.

Famous Capricorn Types (natal Capricorn placements listed)

Aristotle Onassis, business magnate: Sun, Mercury, Venus, Uranus
Dolly Parton, singer: Sun, Mercury, Venus
J. Edgar Hoover, FBI director: Sun, Mercury, Venus
Joan Baez, singer-activist: Sun, Mercury
Elvis Presley, singer-actor: Sun, Mercury, Venus
Marlene Dietrich, actress: Sun, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn,



Aquarius

Breaking the Rules

Glyph: ♒

Symbol: The Water Bearer

Mode: Fixed

Element: Air

Planet: Uranus/♅

House: Eleventh

Motto: "I'm a Round Peg in a Square Hole in a Curved Universe!"

Freedom Fighter

My off-the-wall motto for Aquarius should instantly suggest that this sign applauds anything that's different—plus it's a real "original" itself. Still, as it's also a fixed-air sign with very strong collective leanings, the Water Bearer doesn't want to become so individualized—or so weird—that it feels isolated from the society it instead wants to help improve. But it does hope that its so-called "strangeness" will be accepted, since its fixity makes this sign less willing to change its nature in order to suit others. Air must have intelligent, social dialogues, and thus Aquarius is not out to needlessly alienate people. It is very fond of observing the workings of the world, especially from a sociological view, one implying an impersonal, cerebral perspective. However, Aquarius assumes that human feelings get in the way of clear perception. The Water Bearer thinks that emotionality tends to cloud or distort the truth in a manner that a detached, objective mind never would (although that's debatable).

Following Capricorn, Aquarius takes us to a different level of relating to society, one that allows room for greater cultural experimentation. Capricorn expects everyone to toe the line in ways that keep the community homogeneous—it distrusts "outsiders" or those who threaten cultural cohesion. Yet this next sign says it's time to bend a few of the Goat's time-honored rules and witness what happens when people are given a taste of greater freedom of social expression. Uniformity goes out the window as Aquarian types—who dare to be different—intentionally jolt society, from time to time. This sign's energy seems rebellious and willful, yet the Water Bearer is trying to fight for the right of all people to be themselves, rather than to bow mindlessly to authority and blindly obey the System. Aquarius urges us to break away from any limited mindset that allows others to determine the lifestyle we live.

Oddball

Aquarius in olden times was associated with Saturn, a planet who knows how hard it is to get anything accomplished within a group that lacks organization and steady commitment. Some Aquarian types do express Saturnian conservatism when involving themselves in larger social concerns. They want collective progress to be made carefully, at a slower pace, and are fearful of any radical change that could abruptly shake up established, workable frameworks—even those that at one time were considered to be progressive or even radical.

Such Saturn-dominated Aquarians put promising social reforms through endless committee evaluations before accepting or rejecting them. Yet the revolutionary spirit of Aquarius is better exemplified by Uranus, a planet of innovative thinking and unbridled truth-seeking. This is the side of the Water Bearer that cannot tolerate social restraints based merely on majority-rule decisions or stale, unchallenged traditions. This is the "rebel with a cause" aspect of Aquarius, ready to tear down the walls of conformity.

Aquarius is not a social misfit or a malcontent eager to destroy the Establishment (disgruntled Uranians are more prone to be like that).

The Water Bearer is actually a farsighted idealist who can envision better worlds of tomorrow for all. It is blessed with a progressive intellect that enables it to brainstorm brilliant solutions that help make our collective lives more interesting.

Also a bit of a techno-freak, Aquarius loves to explore innovative ways to make everyday life read more like a science-fiction novel. In its Uranian mode, the Water Bearer is a wild-eyed genius who lives in an energized world of abstract thought that traffics in theoretical concepts about reality's mentally fluid nature: Intuit it and it shall be possible. "Never stop being inventive," says Aquarius, who has no trouble telling all narrow-minded skeptics to go take a hike!

Due to all of this, some Aquarian types are dismissed as oddball eccentrics who are too way-out to be taken seriously, unless they start causing trouble in the ranks (and then they must be stopped). Otherwise, their harmless and even entertaining futuristic ravings are tolerable. Luckily, Aquarius is detached enough—not being all that emotionally vulnerable—to brush off the ridicule of critics. It remains determined (fixity) to formulate a social vision that is way ahead of its time. That's not to say that a few Aquarian types don't flip out and become disturbing to the community—as some do go wacko—but, behind any apparent madness, their intention is to foster respect and appreciation for human diversity. They want everyone to feel liberated from timeworn social rituals.

A Friend in Need

One of the main themes associated with Aquarius is friendship, yet not that of the bosom-buddy variety. Aquarius is too democratic—and too varied in its tastes—to ever think it could choose only one person to be its best friend in the whole world. The Water Bearer wants to be friendly and sociable with lots of fascinating people, and it does this by forming looser bonds that do not require high maintenance or heavy, one-on-one involvement (as if that's something a sign claiming to have about a hundred or so "close" friends need worry about).

Aquarius likes to keep its ties on the casual but stimulating side. If pals unpredictably pop in and out of the Water Bearer's life, everything's cool (it won't tolerate being possessed by others and it often needs to relate to new faces, much like Gemini). Aquarius doesn't want relationships that are too demanding and time-consuming, so this is not a sign that lets itself get too attached and committed in its social contacts. It tends to breeze in and out of the lives of many, and is happy to be able to relate to a wide range of interesting folks.

Although Aquarius may seem aloof and emotionally detached, its unpossessive attitudes are just what it needs to grow and develop. Freedom of movement is important to the Water Bearer, which is harder to actualize when involved with people who are clingy or needy (especially friends who hardly have a life of their own and who crave Aquarius' company much too much). Air needs space to move about, to ensure it stays well ventilated. It likes groups, but hates to feel crowded. It needs as much elbow room, socially, as does Sagittarius.

Still, altruistic Aquarius will volunteer its time to help out friends in need, especially when something unusual is happening in such people's lives. As long as the same pals don't hit on them too much to do little favors—and the Water Bearer sizes up such "users" pretty quickly—Aquarian types are willing to pitch in and assist without expecting anything in return. (Compare that to Capricorn and Libra, who would both keep track of all favors asked and later expect others to reciprocate—especially the Goat.)

Mind Flashes

Aquarius is given to unusual mental patterns—perhaps erratic brainwave activity—that enables it to flash on ideas at lightning speed, and even to suddenly have the answers it's looking for. The Water Bearer is able to tap into the future and bring such images into the now, for at least a brief look. Its intuition may come and go, but when it feels zapped, it "knows" its on the right track and will follow its strong hunches about people and situations.

However, being an air sign, Aquarius will also want to come up with a theory explaining how it knows what it knows. This is a sign with a talent for designing thought systems that are brilliant but complex. For Aquarius, flashes of insight often contain an instant overview

of the total picture. All the Water Bearer has to do is intellectually structure and flesh out its grand vision, while adding even more to it, as one flash of insight sparks another.

What may be the Water Bearer's biggest obstacle, in selling its futuristic concepts, is its obvious impatience with slower minds that are too fear-based to take bold chances. Aquarius lacks the persuasive skills of diplomatic Libra, and it can explode when rejected by those who refuse to hear what genius really sounds like. ("But I've found *the* answer!" pleads frustrated Aquarius.) Not all Water Bearers are geniuses, of course, but they are quite bright and open-minded enough to keep their brains well exercised. Their gift is to be able to look at any problem from an unusual slant, and usually one that draws opposition from conservatives. Aquarius will need to develop common sense and stay calm when urgently trying to pitch its visionary ideals, especially those Uranian Aquarians who demand that reform happen overnight.

From the Heart?

Aquarius is cool-headed and, in its estimation, highly rational. Everything in the Water Bearer's world needs to make sense, which is why it takes a dim view of purely emotional interpretations of life. The watery world of feelings is murky to Aquarius in ways that are blinding. Being one to avoid mental fogginess, the Water Bearer supports intellectual clarity. Emotions also put us in contact with personal matters of the heart. Aquarius is very brainy and doesn't always relate well to even its own strictly personal, heartfelt needs (those apart from its future hopes for the collective). And it's surely not the sentimental type.

The Aquarian ego has a hard time focusing exclusively on self-fulfillment in ways that evoke a personal sense of being special and better than others (no wonder this sign is as far away from Leo as a sign can get). The Water Bearer is too quick to divert attention away from itself and instead on to those with whom it networks. The truth is, if it has such a tough time warming up to itself—even for all the right reasons—it's no wonder others sometimes feel that friendly Aquarius also has a cold side to its nature that makes its heart seem unreachable.

This sign, however, is part of a group of signs (Sagittarius to Pisces) that are trying to develop a more transpersonal awareness of life. Therefore, Aquarius thinks that the smart thing to do is to not allow itself to be dictated by its heart or by the emotionality of others. Still, one way to unify the world is to feel truly for one another, to put ourselves in someone else's shoes long enough to empathize. Aquarius is a sign that learns early on not to expect stability, and thus not to get too attached to people and things—since that only leads to deep disappointment and (gulp!) emotional pain.

Yet, if the Water Bearer is the adventurous, social experimenter it claims to be, why not plunge into the unknown depths of feeling and see what happens? How bad can it be to evoke a few tears or even an illogical fit of rage once in a while? Aquarius may find that studying quantum physics is a far easier task than turning on its emotional valve and letting raw feelings flow. Nonetheless, the Water Bearer needs to approach life, at times, straight from the heart and not panic if doing so goes against its mind-glorifying ideologies.

Team Player

Cerebral Aquarius is so interested in exploring the unusual in life that it could probably entertain itself forever with its eclectic studies and human observations, even if it had nobody else with whom to share this experience (all fixed signs can be self-contained, although Leo and Aquarius really need people). However, the Water Bearer knows that its own progress depends on how effectively it fraternizes with all members of society, in its effort to enlighten people about better ways to raise their consciousness and heighten their social awareness. Maybe because the ego is not as pronounced in this sign, Aquarius has less trouble being a team player. Actually, the nature of any planet found in Aquarius at birth better determines how open we are to engaging in group activity—Mars, Uranus, and Saturn here seem to be less cooperative and adaptable.

Aquarius typically believes that much can get done with the right kind of social cooperation, but it doesn't consider the varying needs

of each individual that makes up the team. It figures that to stay democratic, everyone is entitled to the same treatment—no special privileges for anyone. This is somewhat paradoxical, since Aquarius champions human individuality on one hand, but then it believes in universal principles that should apply to all, unconditionally. The Water Bearer doesn't care much for prima donnas who think they're better than the rest (no wonder this sign can be an enemy of royalty and aristocracy). Still, Aquarius needs to understand—perhaps by working more on its emotional development—that not everyone is psychologically equipped to do well in groups or to enjoy exchanging energy on that impersonal a level.

Rockin' with Uranus

Aquarius' modern agent of social enlightenment is Uranus, a planet with a zest for inventive living. Called the Great Awakener, Uranus is no friend of the status quo. It is a galvanizing force that stirs dynamic and rapid collective growth, the kind that's not easily assimilated by the masses until the shock wears off and changes are later seen as excitingly progressive. Aquarius would love to identify itself with such a planet (and both surely know what it's like to be misunderstood by society).

Although Uranus can be obstinate—so sold on the rightness of its brilliant vision that it won't adopt any other outlook—it's not really all that fixed in its disposition, unlike Aquarius. The Water Bearer can be very set in its ideals—it won't compromise regarding its principles—and can at times be accused of trying to force reformative measures onto others (Aquarius can be more dictatorial that it realizes). Uranus, although explosive in its urgency to change things, doesn't want to sustain any social campaign for too long, especially when alternative routes are suddenly made available. But Aquarius' odd stick-to-it-tiveness can make it appear reactionary and less willing than Uranus to change with the times. That's when its true fixed nature comes out, loud and clear.

Uranus is more sporadic and erratic in nature than seemingly better-focused Aquarius. Uranus is more fiery in temperament—sparks-

a-flying—than the cool-headed Water Bearer, although this sign can be passionately supportive of unpopular or controversial causes. Uranians protect their own freedoms first, and may even seem insensitive to the plight of others (remember, the Saturnian side of Aquarius finds a lot of what Uranus stands for to be destabilizing and not in the best interest of the public). Yet the intuitive grasp of this planet, and its courage to dive headlong into the unknown, appeals to Aquarius, who likes to assume that one's mental powers are only as limited as one's doubts, fears, and ignorance.

Closing Comments

Wherever Aquarius is in our chart describes where we're allowed to take sharp turns and veer away from any conservative programming we've received from the preservers of traditional society. We may find ourselves resistant to authority, especially the kind that intimidates our ability to think for ourselves and arrive at original conclusions. Our life may not be a smooth and steady experience wherever Aquarius is emphasized, since sudden changes can point us in unexpected directions—yet often advantageously so. Adaptability is important, even though we may attempt to force outer conditions to yield to our ideals, with mixed results. Aquarius urges us to come up with ingenious solutions rather than to stay stuck in a rut. Life may open many doors by surprise, those that allow us to enter freely and partake of new ways to create a better reality for ourselves and others.

Perhaps Aquarius is teaching us to become more gregarious and willing to find out about people who are blatantly different from us. Humanity is made up of a wide assortment of colorful folks who can help us feel more like universal citizens. (Aquarius needs to go on a trip around the world with Sagittarius to learn about how much fun cultural diversity can be.) Actually, Aquarius is where we are apt to dare ourselves to break down social barriers, and live life a bit on the wild and crazy side, in fun, self-expressive ways.

It's hard to hang on to security wherever we have Aquarius, since our life situations may constantly promote change, not stability. But the one thing that we can count on is an exciting time, once we let go

and stop trying to live the life that others have already mapped out for us without our permission. Our time on Earth is too short to be wasted by fulfilling somebody else's shortsighted definition of our "true" role as a member of society.

FAMOUS AQUARIUS TYPES (natal Aquarius placements listed)

William Burroughs, novelist: Sun, Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Uranus
Oprah Winfrey, television celebrity-actress: Sun, Mercury, Venus
Thomas Edison, inventor: Sun, Mercury, Neptune
Helen Gurley Brown, publisher: Sun, Mercury
Wolfgang Mozart, composer: Sun, Mercury, Venus, Saturn
Carole King, singer-songwriter: Sun, Mercury, Venus



PISCES

The Art of Dreaming

Glyph: ♓
Symbol: The Fishes
Mode: Mutable
Element: Water
Planet: Neptune/♆
House: Twelfth
Motto: "With an Open Heart, I Swim the Deepest Cosmic Waters!"

The Final Magic

Starting with Aries, each sign becomes progressively more complex in its psychology. This really becomes apparent by the time we arrive at Libra, who—along with the remaining five signs—takes into account the rights and needs of all others, not just of any one individual. The juggling acts thus required can make life more difficult—but perhaps more intriguing—yet these signs are well built for such interpersonal challenges. Aquarius embarks on an exciting course of authentic living that reflects its broad concern for collective growth, although its focus is mostly on an intellectual level. Its social theories and abstract principles are expected to yield the answers needed to improve the human condition—*if* everyone goes along with the program.

Aquarius intuits humanity's untapped higher potential. It will march in the streets, if it must, to protest undue governmental control and to advocate a freer, illuminated society—one that sparks the creative originality in people everywhere. "Let technology help us get

there quicker," advises Aquarius. "Don't be afraid to experiment with what sounds too incredible to be true. An amazing future awaits us!"

Aquarius means well, although it assumes that all disharmonious conditions on a mass level can be corrected by implementing brilliant social reforms and by having progressive leadership. Once shown better models for creating new societies—ones based on greater equality and tolerance—the world is thus expected to radically improve. In theory, everyone will embrace diversity like never before, and prejudices based on fear and mistrust will be eradicated. Aquarius hopes that humanity will then turn its attention to unlocking the awesome gifts of expanded mind power, something that should help us all become further enlightened.

However, to have the Cosmos end the zodiac with Aquarius would imply that our collective future ultimately belongs to a super-race of geniuses—some who are perhaps telepathic, and all who are capable of astoundingly complex mental feats and the ability to operate with flawless, robotic precision. Think of people loaded with implanted computer chips, made to give them that extra intellectual boost—plus with replaceable body parts that help defy aging and death! Science fiction or inevitable reality? Aquarius is forever seeking ideal scenarios for all, and the thrill of enjoying advanced brainpower *and* extended life is certainly part of the Water Bearer's vision of an ideal future (of course, we'll all have to show a genius for social tolerance, as well).

However glorious will be the tomorrows that collectively await us, Aquarian-style, we still have a large and often painful chunk of human experience to undergo, one that is best symbolized by the last of the water signs, Pisces. As well as culminating the zodiac process, Pisces—coming before Aries—also symbolizes the less-observable, underground waters of spirit that feed new life potential ready to incarnate (think of our prenatal, Piscean water environment in the womb, just before we're born). We first emerge unformed from the oceanic, preconscious realm of Pisces, but eventually we return to its deepest waters in an impending state of fuller self-awareness, as we begin to dissolve all that has ever kept us feeling separate from others on our innermost level.

This hypnotic sign lures us into its powerful vortex to strip us of all the trappings of ego and selfish, worldly desire. Pisces guides us toward a vast sea of teeming, invisible energy that lovingly holds the content of all that exists in an unbroken, mystical state of Unity. Everything is One in this numinous, infinite Universe of the Fishes. Duality is only an illusion, perhaps a bad dream.

Full of Soul

As a mutable-water sign, Pisces is less able to establish fixed, rigid ways of viewing the world. It doesn't easily define reality in concrete terms. The Fishes are subject to much change in their perceptions, depending on the flow of life's continuous currents. Mutable water is very open and responsive to the hidden emotions of others, especially their unspoken sorrows. Pisces' sensitive feelers quietly reach out in all directions to detect subtle undertows in people. Indeed, receptivity is highly pronounced, yet Pisces doesn't suffer the petulant moodiness common to cardinal Cancer, nor the dark brooding of fixed Scorpio. If anything, it feels weighed down and deeply saddened by the inhumanity that occurs throughout the world. A soul-weary depression can result, as the Fishes naturally empathize with victims everywhere—and not always those of the human kind. However, Pisces also identifies with saints, mystics, gurus, and other cosmic light-bearers who try to redeem humanity's soul and lift our spirit to otherworldly dimensions.

The Fishes feel our joy and pain as their own, which is something Aquarius isn't able or willing to do. Pisces, not an emotionally detached sign, has a vast overview of existence that allows it to pull back and perceive the deeper purpose of humanity's highs and lows. It essentially perceives earthly living as a struggle—after all, integrating spirit with matter is tough work—but Pisces also senses that this task can be made easier once we recognize our true spiritual essence. Our destiny is to evolve our way back Home to the indefinable Oneness of All, that impossible-to-conceive state of pure being in existence before the Big Bang's awesome "Let there be light!" beginning of time and space. Most Piscean types certainly aren't consciously contemplating

life as esoterically as this, but they do sense larger, even fated, life patterns at work to enrich each soul's path and give it multilevel meaning (yet not in the more intellectualized manner of Sagittarius). What Pisces senses about life stems from a deeper knowing.

This last sign has the most unguarded ego of all, and thus it is highly vulnerable to outer invasion—especially the energies of others, but also from all sorts of environmental pollutants. The Fishes are quite susceptible to the psychological ups and downs of human experience, but are at odds with themselves regarding such instabilities. One fish swims toward the light, and is always ready to help heal and unify all beings wounded by life's harsher, unjust realities. Social underdogs and disenfranchised people are warmly embraced by the redeemer side of the Fishes. None are turned away, as this facet of Pisces is filled with compassion and empathy.

The other fish descends into darker, shadowy depths and—sensitive to the horrors of living—is dragged down in spirit by a fragmented, confused world in turmoil. This part of Pisces is most susceptible to merging with life's seamier elements, as if unconsciously identifying with all that is most unredeemable and hopeless. This is the fish more troubled by clouded vision and feelings of emptiness. Perhaps it takes two fishes to symbolize Pisces because together they reflect the totality of life in its varying stages of integration and disintegration. Piscean types typically find themselves pulled in such contrasting directions (i.e., world-renowned humanitarian by day, chronic alcoholic by night). Perhaps no other sign, except Scorpio, is capable of such extreme, divergent expression.

Vanishing Pool

As Aries is the sign of the greatest self-interest—something it needs to properly develop—Pisces is the sign of the least self-preoccupation, although it is enthralled with and even addicted to the intoxicating outpourings of its own unconscious. This suggests it sometimes has difficulty escaping from its own inner world. However, Piscean subjectivity is powerful and boundless. What it vividly feels inside itself typically stems from outside sources (such as the strong emotional energy

currents of other people). The Fishes keenly pick up on whatever is drifting in the atmosphere, yet they seem to lack the psychological filters needed to reject that which is unhealthy to body, mind, and spirit. Their door is always wide open, letting anything enter—including all that is undesirable and even sabotaging on a soul level.

One big temptation for Pisces involves the loss of a personal, ego-driven identity. Here's a case where the malleability of mutable water makes retaining a structured sense of self difficult. "Mold me into anything you want to," says Pisces, "I'm truly impressionable." Somebody should show Pisces a NASA close-up shot of the pockmarked Moon and ask, "Is *this* how you want to end up looking?" The Fishes are easily bombarded by all kinds of random energies, as if they lack the defense mechanisms that all the other eleven signs have learned to employ. Amazingly, this sign totally surrenders itself to life.

Unlike its opposite sign, Virgo, Pisces is not selective in the experiences it allows itself to undergo. This lack of discrimination is often what gets it in deep trouble, but it also makes Pisces the most tolerant and nonjudgmental sign of all. To discriminate would be to weed something out, and that goes against the Piscean longing for unity.

Nonetheless, Pisces needs to avoid letting its ego vanish into a black pool of nothingness, since it can otherwise tolerate living out its life as a cipher or an invisible being, one forever unnoticed by the world. Something in this sign makes it feel it's not supposed to stand out and grab for the world's attention. (Leo would make a wonderful publicity agent for the Fishes—"First," roars theatrical Leo, "we gotta change that name. How about the Fabulous Flaming Fishes?") Wisely and maturely serving some greater universal cause is exactly what the Cosmos has in mind for Pisces, but to just senselessly undergo an ego-disappearing act—and confusing it with true spirituality—is a major blind spot of this sign. Pisces types need to preserve a strong but resilient sense of self, in order to make their dreams come true.

Walking on Water?

Pisces is like Sagittarius in that it wholeheartedly believes in the impossible. Both signs, never wanting to give up on hope, place great

faith in life's potential for last-minute miracles. Both believe in beautiful, grand finales, complete with unearthly rewards waiting at the end of the cosmic rainbow—although Sagittarius is more apt to head to Las Vegas first to see how luck can miraculously manifest! Pisces instead prays for a little more peace on earth to ease the plight of humans undergoing misery everywhere.

This is a sign that sometimes interprets the world too melodramatically, although famines and pestilence and ravaging, incurable diseases are all devastating reminders of how clearly hellish living on Earth can be for those less fortunate. They are not figments of an overactive imagination. Yet if Pisces would allow itself to say it actually hates one thing with a passion—not an easy thing to for the Fishes do—it would choose human cruelty. This is the most humane, "do-no-harm" sign the zodiac offers.

Do-gooders of the world typically have a strong dose of Pisces—and its associated planet, Neptune—in their charts, at least when they identify with the ideals of the fish moving toward the light. (Piscean "no-gooders" are the ones who blindly follow the other fish into darker, toxic waters.) Humanitarian service is an excellent way to channel Piscean energy, although it puts us in emotional contact with how precarious life can be—a sudden disaster can change everything in one's world overnight. Maybe Pisces doesn't allow itself to become too attached to the material world, knowing how life-altering fate can be, and how temporal everything is, security-wise. Profound Pisces teaches us to be in the world, but not of it—to have one foot in the door of the material realm, but to have the other submerged in the transcendental waters of more eternal matters. Its understanding of life's greater meaning can be comprehensive.

All this sounds like a temperament that seeks purity on the physical realm and perfection on the spiritual plane, one that smacks of a somewhat unreal yearning for sainthood. Actually, here's a chance for the ego to come out of hiding and (unfortunately) swell out of proportion, as some otherworldly Piscean types perceive themselves to be cosmic ambassadors from higher dimensions—perhaps even aliens,

from other galaxies, who are using their "special powers" to help step up the soul energies of all earthlings on this planet. Pisces feeds such fantasies.

Sadly, Pisces can con itself into believing its own grandiose, spiritual hype—who's to prove otherwise?—while using its charisma to mesmerize its starry-eyed followers. New-Age con artists come under this sign, as well as those who use imaginative ways to bamboozle the unsuspecting. It's a shame to see Piscean types who want to connect with Spirit so badly that they'll use any fraudulent or self-delusional means to do so.

Rather than attempt to conjure up supernatural powers and mystify others by adopting the ethereal persona of a wizard or sorceress, Pisces would be better off chucking the theatrics and instead going down to the soup kitchens in the inner cities to do some real magical work—or volunteering to help out at hospices, or even getting involved in fundraising charity events. Heck, Pisces may discover it does have supernatural power in these areas, the kind that gets others motivated to give of themselves to those seemingly less blessed in life. Pisces Liz Taylor found her true calling when she turned her attention to promoting AIDS awareness. Her ability to connect to the hearts of so many along these lines throughout the years has been phenomenal, and her efforts here are a perfect example of Piscean energy at its best.

Imagine

Saving the world is a mighty big task that could prove too much for any one sign to accomplish, although Pisces seems to be the only one interested in taking on that job. Yet in playing the role of savior, one could easily end up a martyr, fighting for a lost cause and perishing. But if inspired enough, the Fishes will risk becoming sacrificial lambs if that's the only way their dreams can instill wondrous, collective visions in others—such as those involving global harmony, universal love, and even a world without war, sickness, or hunger.

Pisces imagines a better life for everyone, one that is free of all such pain and discord. It is understandable, then, why this sign suffers disillusionment like no other. Is this world too cold-hearted and indifferent

to appreciate the selfless objectives of the Fishes? Sometimes that's how Pisces feels, and this prompts it to escape into the depths of its own illusionary inner world and thus remain insulated from harsh, mundane realities.

The Fishes will have to be careful when retreating under these conditions, since their own form of virtual reality is much more awesomely appealing than anything the outer world can dish up. A better path to take is one that allows us to harness the incredible resources of Piscean imagination, and to use such abilities for the greater good of society (yes, Pisces still needs to realize that it's part of the social structure, and not some forsaken soul living on the outer fringes—even though this sign is comfortable playing the hermit, at times, and living a secluded life, far away from mainstream worldliness).

Pisces is blessed with the power to positively channel archetypal energy from the collective unconscious, meaning that it can tap into angelic realms and provide us with the rarest and loftiest of images. Beauty expressed on this level can be exquisite and is able to soothe our deepest selves. It is good for all Piscean types never to deprive themselves of the finest their culture has to offer in the realms of art, music, and drama. This safely allows them to have the transcendent experiences they secretly crave and need.

Closing Time

Being the last sign of the zodiac, Pisces symbolizes the poignant endings of conditions that have already peaked and are now preparing to break down and dissolve. The cycle that began with Aries—fresh and vigorous—is coming to a meaningful close here, implying it's now time to rest, reflect, and let go of our attachment to the material world. It's the assignment of the Fishes to further the disintegration of all that once gave us solid support and concrete meaning.

Life thus seems to be in a woozy state of collapse and uncertainty, almost as if the Cosmos is drunk and a bit disoriented (hmmm . . . and after being so disciplined and organized in Capricorn). Nothing is to hold its shape for long. Everything is fluid and constantly changing, yet not for the purpose of instigating new beginnings and getting our

little ego all pumped up. Changes here lead to a cessation of self-willed activity, as Pisces instead teaches us to stop asserting ourselves in action just to satisfy earthy ambitions. Instead we are to descend to our depths to experience stillness and contemplation. Who could have imagined that the zodiac would finally lead to all of this? Yet, from water we came and to water we return, hopefully in a more illuminated state of self-awareness.

As a result, Pisces feels it can't trust permanent security for long, at least not in a worldly sense. It knows that everything eventually dissolves. Yet society still expects us to build reliable, tangible structures, as we accumulate things of material value. (In fact, Taurus got all this going quite a while back on the day it received its first paycheck and went to town!) But Pisces is not sure that such "stuff" is what it needs to be amassing. It knows material attachments won't last forever, and they really don't even feed us what we need on a soul level. "Everything is destined to break down or fall apart," realizes Pisces. And some things end in disturbing ways that play havoc with our emotions.

Thus, the Fishes—at least unconsciously—have determined not to exclusively possess anything, no matter how precious. Yet they *are* willing to share what they have freely and lovingly with the rest of the world. Sharing unconditionally like this is one way to prevent any sense of ultimate loss. As this slow process of dissolution takes over, Pisces is challenged to distill the deeper meaning—the underlying essence—from all experiences on Earth, and then to offer that essence back to the Universe, to later be recycled for the collective enrichment of all. It's not to be retained for self-seeking purposes, since Pisces is the most universally oriented sign of them all.

Neptune Heals

Neptune—Pisces' associated planet of inner illumination—helps us tap into the one eternal reality that underlies the conscious, material realm in which we humans become so engrossed. Neptune symbolizes an indescribable, cosmic stillness, where time and space do not exist—at least not in the normal manner. This is the least earthly of all the

planets, which is fitting for a sign that is the least materialistic in orientation. Both Neptune and Pisces enjoy retreating to more quiet, inner places of the heart and soul. Worldly ambition is not strong, but big, beautiful dreams of universal love and harmony do appeal emotionally to both.

However, Neptune is more prone to be extreme in its release of irrational feelings that flood our consciousness and alter our senses. It enables us to plug directly into our unconscious yearnings. Pisces—being more subject to our cultural climate—instills an obligation to focus on often neglected societal concerns that affect the welfare of many. We feel driven to apply this sign's energies to humanitarian issues. Yet Neptune—temperamentally a mystic—is content at times just to have us enter its subjective, magical world to explore its wonders, typically while we're alone. It's less drawn to organized community involvement and doesn't feel the same sense of active duty to serve that Pisces does (although strongly Neptunian types do need altruistic social outlets to keep them balanced—too much seclusion and avoidance of human contact can get them in trouble psychologically). If anything, it's Pisces that needs to find quality time alone, away from others who can be energy drainers, since the Fishes are surrounded too often by dependent people in need.

Neptune, like Pisces, can be a marvelous healing force. Both planet and sign inspire us to dissolve all that impedes our growth and that destroys life, although we humans sometimes unwisely use these energies in distorted ways and end up destroying ourselves, rather than society's negative elements. Neptune and Pisces do not have a healthy sense of boundaries and can fail to shield themselves from unwanted external forces (even those coming from darker areas of the unconscious). This leads to great vulnerability, although it seems Neptunians suffer more here than Piscean types, who appear to apply greater detachment (a trick they picked up from both Aquarius and their opposite sign, Virgo). Perhaps the Fishes simply choose to ignore what otherwise could prove bothersome. Neptune is more prone to absorb its surroundings, and the people in them, than is Pisces, even if this is not all that obvious on the surface.

Pisces also seems to be better at visualizing life's larger schemes. Neptune may sense that a vast, underlying force is in operation, but Pisces is better able to understand how all the pieces of anything fit to comprise a whole. Pisces is more observational than Neptune, who gets its information from internal sources, not from the outer world. Unlike Neptune, a planet more apt to be blinded by its subjectivity, Pisces is less devoted to its beliefs. Still, both keenly sense that there is much more to life than meets the eye—a profound awareness that meditation and contemplation can reveal to us.

Closing Comments

Wherever Pisces is in our chart describes where we're guided to go within and discover how to make this often confusing area of our life work best for us. Outside advice won't always make sense, probably because it doesn't sensitively address our internal needs (plus, until we can better articulate such needs, nobody can really help us). Our Piscean parts require gentle treatment and tender concern. Here we have hidden wisdom that needs to be coaxed out of us, once we learn to value listening to our inner voice. Following the path of worldly success will not appease the hungers and insecurities we may feel inside. Tuning in to a more transcendent reality—which helps us feel more purposefully connected to something larger than ourselves—seems instead to give us greater peace of mind and a sense that we can visualize a better future for ourselves.

Pisces also helps us become more accepting of what we cannot change (compared to Neptunians, who are more prone to seek "miracle" cures and other quick, magical fixes for what ails them). Self-deception tied to misplaced faith may be stronger in Neptunians. Pisces, at least for the sake of balance, can draw from the strengths of its opposite sign, analytical Virgo (a sign less prone to place faith in things unproven). Still, Neptune tunes into the Piscean desire to take away the pain in people and to restore their souls with hope. We won't grow properly with our Piscean energies if we remain too narrow-minded to believe that there are positive, universal forces guiding us toward spiritual fulfillment. This part of our life needs our fluid imagination